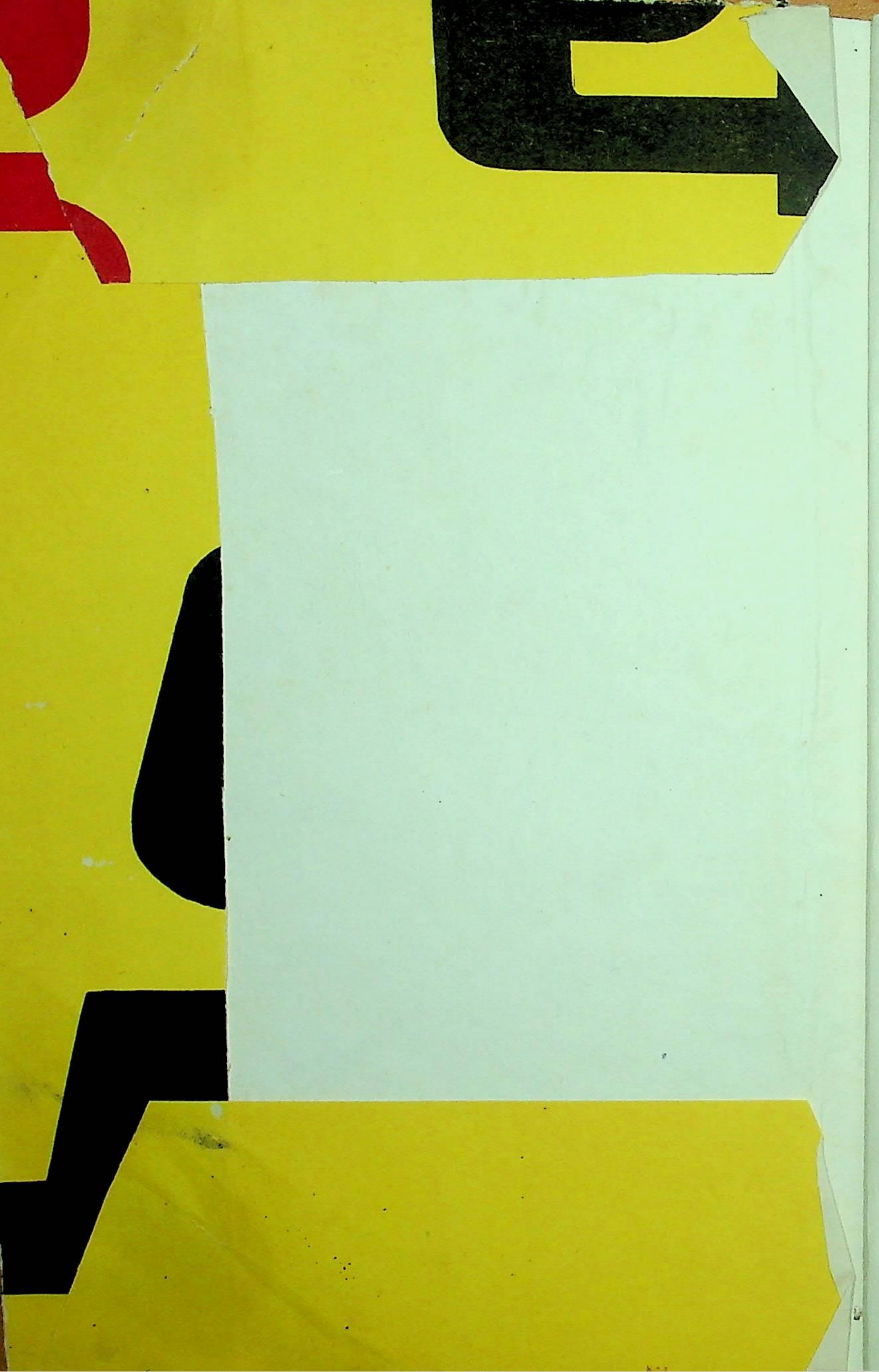
THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE BHAGAVADGĪTĀ

SWAMĪ KRIṢHNĀNANDA



THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE BHAGAVADGĪTĀ

SWAMĪ KRISHNANANDA

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PREFACE

We have the satisfaction, again, of dedicating to the seekers of the Higher Life, as well as the general public, this novel Text on the profundities of The great Scripture of Yoga, the Bhagavadgītā, consisting of the series of extempore discourses delivered by the Author during the Course of Training held for students at The Yoga-Vedānta Forest Academy of this society. This deeply learned analysis of the subject, and the spiritual force that is permeating throughout the continuity of the Chapters of the Book, will, we firmly hope, fulfil the innermost longings of the searching spirit of every sincere pilgrim on the great journey of life.

Shivanandanagar,
18th February, 1980

—THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

CONTENTS

		Page
	PREFACE ..	(iii)
	CONTENTS ...	(v)
I.	The Universal Scope of the Bhagavadgītā ...	1
II.	The Battlefield of Life ...	17
III.	The Spirit of True Renunciation ...	33
IV.	The Struggle for the Infinite ...	50
V.	The Mortal and the Immortal ...	67
VI.	The Meaning of Duty ...	83
VII.	The Nature of Right Understanding ...	97
VIII.	The Yoga of Action ...	111
IX.	The Divine Incarnation and God-Oriented Activity ...	130
X.	Forms of Sacrifice and Concentration ...	143
XI.	The Yoga of Meditation ...	162
XII.	God and the Universe ...	177
XIII.	Cosmology and Eschatology ...	191
XIV.	The Glory and Majesty of the Almighty ...	206
XV.	The Way and the Goal ...	219
XVI.	The Supreme Person ...	233
XVII.	The Play of the Cosmic Powers ...	244
XVIII.	The Yoga of the Liberation of Spirit ...	260

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE BHAGAVADGĪTĀ

I

THE UNIVERSAL SCOPE OF THE BHAGAVADGĪTĀ

The Bhagavadgītā is a well-known gospel. Very few might have not heard the name, "Bhagavadgītā", for it is almost universally accepted as a scripture, not merely in a sense of holiness or sanctity from the point of view of a religious outlook, but as what has been regarded as a guide in our day-to-day life, which need not necessarily mean a so-called religious attitude. Our life is vaster in its expanse than what we usually regard as a vocation of religion. And if religion remains as an aspect of our life and does not constitute the whole of life, the Bhagavadgītā is not a religious scripture, because its intention is not to cater to a side of our nature or a part of our expectation in life, but the whole of what we need, and what we are. This special feature of the Bhagavadgītā makes it a little difficult for people to comprehend its significance and message. While hundreds of expositions there are on this great gospel and several commentaries have been written and are being written on it even now, it is difficult to believe that its meaning has been completely grasped, as it becomes a novelty after novelty as we go deeper and deeper into it. The more we read it, the fresher

does it appear before our eyes, like the rise of the sun every morning. This speciality and comprehensiveness which is the approach of the Gītā is what makes it a little distinct from the other well-known religious guidelines. We have heard it often said that it is an episode in a large epic of India, known as the Mahābhārata, and we regard it as a teaching given by someone to someone else in some ancient times in a particular context of those ancient days. We are likely to read this epic as a story, like a drama or a play for our diversion and emotional satisfaction. But this epic of which the Bhagavadgītā is an episode is not a story come from a grandmother to a child, though it is narrated in the fashion of a dramatic performance with images and artistic touches of characters which portray the various facets of human liking and attitude. What inspires us and stirs us when we read an epic of this kind is the sympathy that exists between these characters and the various phases of our own personal lives. We find ourselves somehow in these epic characters. We are drawn to these images of persons and situations on account of there being a representation, as it were, of what we ourselves are at different moments of time or in the layers of our own personalities. All these people, the heroes and heroines, the dramatic personnae of the Mahābhārata, are present inside us, and we ourselves are these at different occasions and times. We have layers of personality in us and these various layers correspond to the ideal images that are portrayed in the characters of this great epic, the

Mahābhārata. Why are we inspired when we read the plays of Shakespeare? Because we are present there. Everyone of these wondrous characters that Shakespeare, for instance, delineates with the masterly stroke of his pen corresponds to our own self in some manner or the other. Every character of Shakespeare is present in us and we are everyone of these. So, we are in sympathy within, we are en rapport with all these characters, and so we are stimulated by a study of his plays. It is human nature as such that is displayed in the dramas of Shakespeare, the epics of Homer or the Mahābhārata. It is not the story of some people that lived sometime ago but a characterisation of all people that may live at any time in the history of the world. Again, to come to the point of Shakespeare, they are not stories of some people, they are stories of people as such, of any person, and the nomenclature of these personalities is only by the way, the essentiality is the attitude, the character and the conduct and the personal and social features that they demonstrate in their temporal existence. The characters are perpetual features in the evolution of the cosmos, while the vehicles which embody or enshrine these characters may vary. These are the specific stages through which the world has to pass and every individual is a part of the world. Everyone has to pass through every one of these stages. So, every character is every person and vice-versa. Thus, while the epic of the Mahābhārata, like some other epics also of the world of this nature, attempts to portray the

culture of an entire nation, or, you may say, the culture of humanity in general, it pin-points its teachings at a central occasion which it regards as the most convenient hour to give its message in its essentiality. The Bhagavadgītā is the kernel of this vast expanded fruit of the Mahābhārata which has matured out of the tree of the culture of India. The philosophic messages which are given in the various chapters of the Gītā are dramatically portrayed in the characters of the story of the epic. So, the one explains the other. The narrative of the Mahābhārata, the epic aspect of this great work, is a performance, in the stage of humanity, of the message that is to be conveyed in the form of the Bhagavadgītā, and, when we look at it the other way round, the Bhagavadgītā is what is intended behind the whole narration of the Mahābhārata. The great author of this epic achieves a double stroke by this materpiece that he has given to mankind. He gives directly a message that has to go into our souls, and at the same time makes it appealing to the various psychological features which constitute our emotional personality. And, as I mentioned a little earlier, its message is not religious in the commonsense meaning of the term, it does not teach any 'religion', if by religion we mean the so-called faiths of the world that are prevalent today, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, or any sectional cult ; though under an outercloak, we may imagine that it is a Hindu scripture. It is a scripture that has originated in India, may be by an accident or a contextual

necessity in the history of the universe. But it is not meant only for the people of India, it is for people, and for all people, and all people for all times. It is, therefore, not a message that Krishna gave to Arjuna so that we can just set it aside as something relevant to those times and not applicable to these days. It is a message of eternity, and it has a timeless significance for everyone of us. It does not get rusted or worn out by the movements of time or the changes that take place geographically, socially or politically. The vicissitudes of life have no impact upon this message, because it arises from a source which transcends the transitions of life. And in a few words which occur towards the end of each chapter, as a colophon thereof, we are given an indication of the eternity, practicality and divinity of its content. It is supposed to be a message which embodies the knowledge of what is ultimately real, and not merely temporarily valuable or significant. When everything passes away, something shall remain, and what that something is, is the object of the quest of this knowledge which is embodied in the Bhagavadgītā. It is called 'Brahmavidyā', the knowledge of the Absolute, Brahman. The reality that cannot further be transcended is called the Absolute. It is so called because it is not related to anything else; it is non-relative Being. I am related to you, and you are related to me, and therefore our existence is relative, one thing hangs on the other. But the Absolute does not hang on something else for its description, character-

isation or existence. In our case, or in the case of anything, existence is conditioned by other existences. For instance, we are dependent on various factors for our life in this world ;—we require sun-light, water, air, food, we require social co-operation and protection and many other things of this nature, so that if these external conditioning features are absent, our personal or individual existence may be wiped out in a few days. We have no independent status of our own, we depend on other factors for our existence, and other things also depend on us in a similar manner. There is thus a mutual dependence of characters, individuals and things in this world. Therefore, we say, the whole world is relative and it has no absolute reality. But this relativity of things in the world is a pointer to the possibility of the existence of something which is not relative. The idea of relativity cannot arise unless there is something which makes us feel that things are relative. That which enables us to be conscious of the relativity of things cannot itself be relative. So, there is a necessity to admit the existence of that which is not relative, and it is designated in scriptures like the Upaniṣhads, as Brahman, the Absolute. This is a name that we give for the purpose of our own descriptive understanding to that which must exist as transcendent to anything that we see with our eyes or anything that we can conceive with our minds. The Bhagavadgītā is the knowledge of the Absolute, Brahmavidyā which is mentioned at the end of each chapter. It is also called an Upaniṣhad,—some-

thing very strange to normal sense. It is an esoteric teaching, plumbing the depths of the essentiality of things behind the veneer of encrustations in the shape of names and forms. An Upanishad is a secret teaching. It is secret because it has concern with that which cannot be seen with the eyes. It is not related to appearances. The names and forms of the world are not the subject of the Upanishads. Its relationship is with that which is behind the names and forms. As its connection is with that which the senses cannot perceive, perhaps even the mind cannot think adequately, it is to an extent regarded as a secret and therefore it is an esoteric teaching; it is 'Upanishad'. The Upanishads being such, the Bhagavadgītā which is regarded as the quintessence of the teachings of the Upanishads is also venerated as an Upanishad. And, interestingly before us, it is mentioned in the plural, '*Iti Srimad-Bhagavadgītāsu Upanishatsu*'. It is not one Upanishad. It appears to be many Upanishads brought together in a forceful concentration. Perhaps, each chapter is an Upanishad by itself; each chapter is a message by its own status. Well, there have been people who thought that even a single verse can be regarded as a message. Devotees of the Bhagavadgītā have received inspiration from even one verse. One may open any page of the Bhagavadgītā, and one will find there something which will inspire the heart at once and lift one up from the turmoils of the ordinary life that one lives in the world. So, it is a plurality of the Upanishads and not one Upanishad merely. All the Upanishads are here, condensed in

their supra-essential essence. So 'Bhagavadgītāsu', again, in the 'songs', not merely the song of the Lord, many messages are conveyed through the various chapters and the verses so that every disease conceivable of human nature can be remedied by some medicine or the other that is there in the form of some word of the Bhagavadgītā. It is a medicine for every illness of life. It is also considered as an essence of all the scriptures,—Sarva-Shāstramayī Gītā. It is said many a time that all the Shāstras, all the lessons that you can have anywhere can be found here in some form. So, it is an esoteric, secret teaching concerning the reality behind things and it does not cater merely to a sentiment that is attached to appearances. It is intended to do you good in the ultimate sense of the term and not merely to satisfy your imagination by temporarily stimulating an emotion. It is not also an academic or theoretical message or gospel concerning the nature of the Absolute or Brahman, for, it is, at the same time,—and this is a special character, again,—a practical guideline for the purpose of treading the path to the realisation of this ultimate reality. It is therefore a 'Yoga-Shāstra', not merely a Brahmavidyā. You will find very few texts which combine these two aspects of teaching. It is not an emphasis that is laid on only one side of our life, but all the sides are equally balanced. It is a theory and a practice ; and practice is preceded by theory. The comprehension of the technique to be employed in any particular line of action is called theory. And when the theory is grasped, you know how to

implement it in your daily life ; that implementation is practice. So, here we have Brahmavidyā and Yoga-Shāstra, the science of the Absolute and the practical teaching on Yoga which is the art of coming in contact with the Absolute, and it is, moreover, something delightfully wonderful and more incapable of ordinary imagination than what we have already noticed. It is a conversation between God and man, which meaning is conveyed by the phrase 'Krishnārjuna-Samvāda', in the colophon. Krishna and Arjuna are taken as occasions for bringing into high-light the relationship that exists between the Absolute and the relative. The epic has a special artistic grandeur and beauty of its own That is the glory of a drama, and you enjoy it, though the enjoyment part of it has behind it a teaching, a moral or a lesson to be conveyed. As I mentioned earlier, the characters of the Mahābhārata are present perpetually in the features of the human being and so are the characters, Krishna and Arjuna. They are eternal relatives and not persons merely that might have lived historically some time many years back. It is not a temporal history that is recounted to us in the epic, it is the story of the eternal drama that is played in the cosmos and is meaningful, therefore, for all times under every circumstance to every person. As the message is imparted to the eternal individual by the eternal Reality, the teaching is also eternal. There is some essence in us which is perpetual in its nature. And that permanent essential something is the individuality of ours, which has a permanent

relationship with the Supreme Being. It is, therefore, not a message conveyed in mere temporal language to suit merely a tentative occasion or a given moment of time, but this specific occasion of the Mahābhārata was taken as a necessary context by the author of the Mahābhārata to convey to the eternal human nature the knowledge of its relationship with the Eternal Absolute. The union of the individual with the Absolute is the final consummation of this story. The setting in tune of Arjuna with Krishna is the setting in tune of ourselves with all beings in a wholeness, which is Brahman, the Absolute. The story of the universe which is also the story of any country or nation, also the story of our own selves, is a story of the movement of all creation to the Creator, the Father of all beings that are here as these widespread phenomena. The world moves towards God. This is the story of creation. This is what is known as evolution. This is what we call desire, and this is what goes also as aspiration. This is the need, this is the requirement, this is the necessity, the hunger and the thirst, and this is everything that is blessed here. All our requirements, whatever be their nature, are necessitated by the particular nature of the context of evolution at any given moment of time in which we are involved, in which every one is wound up entirely. You can imagine with this little introduction the wide-spread comprehension of the gospel, the teachings of the Bhagavadgītā. It leaves nothing unsaid, and the language in which this message

is conveyed has behind it an incomprehensible secret. And the deeper you go within yourself the deeper is the meaning you will discover in it. If your outer personality reads the Gītā, you will see only the outer feature of its message. If you study it as a linguist, a Sanskritist, or an academician, you will see only that aspect, a beautiful story narrated which appears to your feelings and emotions, or to your reason. If you read it as a psychologist, you will find there an unravelling of the mystery of the human psyche. If you read it as a rationalist, you will find there the arguments for substantiating the varieties of the cosmos; and if you read it as a seeker, you will find there a parent to take care of you, a father and a mother, who will console you and solace you under moments of despair when clouds hang heavy in the horizon and you cannot visualise the light of the sun. So, such is the tremendous depth of this well-known gospel and teaching known as the Bhagavadgītā, and of the epic of the Mahābhārata in which the Bhagavadgītā occurs displaying the whole character of mankind. It reveals an entire culture, not only of the Indian nation, but of all nationalities in their various stages of evolution.

You will be surprised that this Divine Message, which should be regarded as spiritual in its character, has been imparted at a very critical moment, when a war was about to take place, in a battle-field, when people were up in arms to fly at each other's throats, when there was heat in the minds

of all that were arrayed in the war-ground. You know what is battle; and an hour or so before this terrific occasion should be regarded as the time for giving a message of eternity. It was not taught in a school or a college; you would have expected such a masterly teaching to be conveyed to students in a church or a temple, in an academy, a university, a college, a hermitage, a monastery, which would have been the proper place to give this message. Spirituality has little to do with war or battle, with fighting and with bloodshed. One cannot imagine the relevance of the wondrous eternity of the message to the awful scene of the battle of the Mahābhārata. But here, again, is the speciality of the Bhagavadgītā. It cannot, therefore, be considered as a religious scripture. You do not expect a religious gospel to be broadcast in a battlefield. You assume an air of holiness, a sanctimonious attitude when you speak of God or religion. By holiness you mean something which is different from an unholy atmosphere. And what can be more unholy than a battle, a war, something unthinkable, detestable and undesirable to the utmost extent, the dread scene of killing each other. And yet, this is the occasion considered to have been most suitable. Yes; the problems of life are not merely religious problems, and we should not be under the impression that we can be happy merely by a so-called religious message. If by religion you understand what is in your mind usually, and you know very well what you understand by religion,—a holy scripture which has to be

carried on the head and worshipped with tremendous piety and fear in an atmosphere which has to be uncontaminated by secularity of any kind, cut off from the atmosphere of the give-and-take attitude of people, of shops and streets and the thoroughfares; a temple, a church, a priest, a ritual. We have our own notions of religion. And religions there are and have been many and we are practising them, yet grief-stricken. We are sorry people, indeed, with all our religion. We are weeping everyday, either openly or secretly, and the religion that we have been hugging as our dear child has not brought any consolation to us. We run to other sources of protection and solace when we are in need of support, and we do not run to religion under every circumstance. We have difficulties of various types, which are not necessarily those which can be solved by the religion that is in our heads today, and this does not require any explanation further. We run about in ten directions everyday for solution of our problems, and we do not always go to a church or a temple if we have some difficulties. This means that our life is something which is not always capable of being confined to the religion of the church or the religion of the temple. We have not been satisfied with the God that we worship, with the religion we practise, with the scripture we read and the message we have received. We are always unhappy for some reason or the other; and man has been always unhappy and he is unhappy today; and we do not know how long he will continue to be such. Is there a solution

for this unhappiness of people? Is it possible for us to be really happy? If this is a possibility, it is worthwhile investigating. And the Bhagavadgītā takes up this task of tackling the problems of life in general and not just any side of our nature. You know very well, everyone of you, that your devotions and your religious practices do not cover the whole of your lives. We have a piety inside our rooms, and a different religion altogether when we walk on the road or purchase a packet of biscuits in the shop, are travelling in the bus or journeying in the train. If our confrontation of life in these various aspects in which we are unwittingly and necessarily involved can be charged with the spirit of religion, we can be said to be truly religious, and that God will help us everywhere, and we need not run to another temporal God for solution of our daily problems. All temporality is a manifestation of eternity, and that which is eternal should be capable of interpreting temporal situations, also. And the Bhagavadgītā as an eternal message is supposed to be a protection to us even in our temporal dealings and our work-a-day life. It is all things put together, like a mother to you; your relationship with your mother is not merely religious,—it is everything. You can run to it for a cup of tea, a spoon of sugar, and you will see that the Gītā has specifically pin-pointed even these little things to relieve us of tension in all the layers of our being. The Bhagavadgītā caters not merely to our outer personality but that essentiality of personality in us which is

related to all things in the world, and the whole creation in its completeness. We are not just citizens of Rishikesh or Uttar Pradesh or India or even this Earth. We have a passport with us for entering into the various planes of existence. We are citizens of the creation of God and merely this earth is not our habitat. We have a duty which far surpasses our temporal obligations and tentative demands as nationals of a particular country or units in a particular community, etc. We have an obligation transcending the limits and the boundries of the nation and the society in which we are born. When we fulfil the requirements of law, abide by the law that reigns supreme or operates in the atmosphere, that law is supposed to take care of us. Law protects. It does not always punish. It protects when we abide by it. It punishes when we disregard and disobey it. Our sufferings in life are therefore to be attributed to a disobedience of the law that operates in this world. We may be thinking that we are obeying a kind of law of a particular country, of a community and a family in which we are born. We think that is all-in-all, and that is enough to take care of us. But you know very well that if you are confined merely to the obedience of the law that prevails only within your family, and are disobedient to the law of the nation as a whole, your obedience to the family-law is not going to help you. The national law will pursue you, because you have disregarded it, notwithstanding the fact that you are humbly obedient to the family-law. And you can extend the analogy

further. The international law is also important and if you kick it aside as if it is nothing, and you are obstinately patriotic in respect of your own little country, that also would not be a solace to you. Your whole country can be placed in a precarious situation because of its disobedience to the international set-up of things. Such is the case with everything, everywhere. We may be obedient to the little laws of this land, but we may be disobedient to a higher law, not merely the international law, but the inter-planary law, the universal law as you may call it. That may take action against you if you are ignorant of its workings. The Bhagavadgītā displays before us the structure of the universal law that operates everywhere. And if you can abide by it, it shall supremely protect you as the protection that you can expect from the Central Constitution of a Government, and your little laws are subsumed under it. Such is the beauty of this great message, the Bhagavadgītā.



II

THE BATTLE-FIELD OF LIFE

We have seen that the occasion for the delivery of the Bhagavadgītā was a field of war which is conspicuous in its occurrence in the context of the Mahābhārata. As we have observed earlier, the Bhagavadgītā does not intend telling us a story for entertaining our leisure hours but to give a permanent message for the salvation of the soul of the human being. That is why it is called a Yoga-Shāstra or a scripture of Yoga. Whatever is said in this great scripture is a sermon on the practice of Yoga, and the necessity for the teaching arises on account of a conflict in which one finds oneself at any given moment of time in one's life; and the whole of the Mahābhārata is a story of conflict. You will gradually realise that the practice of Yoga resolves itself into a simple system of the overcoming and the balancing of forces for the purpose of resolving all conflicts. The whole universe moves in two directions, you may say, the centripetal and the centrifugal. There is an outward centrifugal urge of the universe which propels it in the direction of space, time and externality. There is also a centripetal impulse to maintain its integrality of status inwardly, and these two tendencies in the universe represent the character of the whole of all nature. And this character that

we see in creation is sympathetically reflected in everyone of us, so that we are also at every moment of time centrifugal and also centripetal; we have an externalising impulse towards activity, social relationship and contacts of various kinds, and at the same time we have a powerful impulse to maintain our integrality and status, as such. We do not wish to lose our independence and status, in the name of outward relationship or even social welfare. All this is conditioned by a need we feel to maintain our freedom, which we may call our own status. Who would like to lose his status in the name of something else? But, side by side with this impulse to retain our individuality or integrality of status, there is also a propulsion towards externalisation, which also we cannot resist. We run about day-in and day-out demonstrating thereby that a complete inwardisation and maintenance of personal status is not the completion of life. This has to be set in tune or harmonised with the external world, or the universe. While we are bent upon maintaining our independence and status, we are also compelled, at the same time, to recognise the existence of other people in the world, things around us, the vast world in front of our eyes, with which we have to maintain a balanced relationship. While we are, in a sense, in a non-spatial and non-temporal indivisibility which we call the status we maintain, we are also in a world of space and time. We are like a double-edged sword which cuts both ways, or like a person who is pulled equally in two different directions, now one urge preponderating and now the

other. The cosmical impulse corresponding to this psychological impasse through which we are passing is designated in the language of Indian philosophy, especially the Vedānta, the Sāmkhya and the Yoga, as the process of the matrix of all things known as Prakriti, a Sanskrit word which means the original substance of all creation. The material of the universe is called Prakriti. It is constituted of certain processes, parts, energies or properties. These are known as *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. *Rajas* is the name that we give to the impulsion dragging anything outwardly into the space-time-complex and compelling everything to relate itself to things outside. *Sattva* is the counter-balancing urge which obliges everything to maintain an indivisibility of internal status, which requires all to maintain a balance and not lose the alignment in the inner layers of personality or the external relationships in society. You know that, if there is no alignment in the inward structure of our psyche, we can go crazy, one becomes neuorotic and a patient psychopathologically. Health is nothing but the harmony of the layers of our personalities. If they are disbalanced we are sick physically or psychologically. So, there is a necessity to maintain inward balance. But that will not do entirely; we have also to maintain a similar balance in our relationship outside. There should be a balanced relationship between you and me, for instance; a balanced relationship with the five elements and yourself,—earth, water, fire, air and ether,—the climatic conditions and the various other conditions that constitute what we call

the outward life of individuals. There is, thus, a conflict everywhere, cosmically and individually. Life is a battle, a situation which does not require a commentary. It is a struggle from birth to death. It is a process of confronting something or the other everyday, a necessity that you feel every moment of time to resolve a situation that has arisen in front of you. When you wake up in the morning, you are face to face with the reality that confronts you as a conflict. You have conflicts inside and conflicts outside. We are not always happy, because happiness is the outcome of the preponderance of *Sattva-guna*, the balancing part within us, and to the extent we are balanced inwardly and outwardly, to that extent we are also happy, delighted and joyous. To the extent *Rajas* preponderates in us, there is a tendency to upset everything,—it may be an upsetting of the layers of our own individual personality or the upsetting of our relationships from the outside world. Any kind of upsetting of an existing balance is the tendency to the absence of joy, which is tantamount to an entering into grief and sorrow. The whole of life is an arena of such a conflict. If we read Homer's Illiad or Odyssey, if we read Milton's Paradise Lost, if we read the Rāmāyana of Vālmīki, if we read the Mahābhārata, we shall find everywhere the same thing presented in different languages and styles, the whole picture presented being the scene of a tremendous conflict, a rubbing of shoulders, a circumstance into which we are thrown unwittingly, the circumstance becoming worse when we have not

got the adequate understanding of the causes of the occurrences. Our condition seems to be growing worse because we do not know why this situation has arisen at all, why there should be conflict of any kind. Why should we not be happy always? Why should there not be a balance, a harmony, an equilibriated relationship inwardly and outwardly? We do not know, and nobody can know, for reasons obvious. But this state of affairs cannot continue for a long time, and we do not wish that it should continue indefinitely. We are not merely entangled individuals; but also individuals in whom is planted a light of reason and a flash of insight which occurs sometimes in our personal lives telling us that, in spite of the unfortunate circumstances in which we find ourselves in the world, there seems to be a hope for the better. We do not always entertain a despairing mood of dejection and utter hopelessness, though, occasionally, when the power of *Rajas*, of external relationship, and a loss of inward stability, becomes very strong and preponderates, we may lose our balance completely. We may not then be even able to think in a right manner. But such occasions are rare; usually we are able to realise that there is a justice in this universe, though in moments of intense suffering we are likely to complain against the system of things and find fault with the structure of the universe. But this we do not do always. There are moments of sobriety when we are able to think in a better manner and feel that there is a need for the resolution of this conflict. That there should

be an urge felt within us to resolve a conflict should be an indication of the possibility of the resolution of the conflict; one cannot entertain merely a hopeless hope. A hope is hopeful, it is not negativity. When you assure yourself that things will be better one day, in some way or the other, some insight is welling up from inside, and that is the inward status of integrality that speaks to you in the words of a super-physical language. These epics of the great masters, whether of the East or of the West, are therefore a depiction of the drama of life. It is a play of various circumstances, situations, colours, each looking independent of others, but somehow collaborating to present the picture of completeness, as in a drama. The dramatic personnae, the people who enact the play, are independent and isolated in their performances. So it does not mean that everyone taking part in the play will present the same picture and place before you an identical situation. Every individual enacting the play is different from the others, has a performance which is distinct from that of others. But the whole drama is a completeness by itself. It is not a distracted chaos. It is harmony and you enjoy the play. When the whole enactment is over, you are delighted. This is a wonderful performance! Thus you go away with happiness. You do not say, 'this man did this and that man did that, there is no connection between one and the other'. You realise the connection in spite of the variegated scenes presented in the drama which may run for hours together in the night and the pictures may be completely different if

individually perceived. But the wholeness behind the acts is the delighting feature. So is life, such the intention of the writing of epics.

We are not always in a position to see the wholeness that is behind the pictures in the form of the drama of creation. We are the dramatic personnae in this great field of activity called this cosmos. 'The whole world is a stage', said Shakespeare, and we are all the people who are acting on this stage, but we are not always conscious that we are playing the drama. This consciousness is wrested out of us somehow by some unfortunate occurrence in us. Look at the fate of a person who is performing one role in a dramatic enactment. He forgets his relationship with the other performer. He behaves as if he is absolutely independent, and has no connection with the entirety of the play. He does not know that there is a direction of the play. He does not know the intention behind the performance. He is acting absolutely independent, presenting as isolated picture. He would cut a sorry figure and spoil the whole game. This we are doing every day. We are spoiling the whole game of life, not knowing that we are items in the totality of the dramatic personnae in this grand enactment of the aims of life, of which the Supreme Being Himself is the Director. His vision is the totality of the picture of the drama. The Bhagavad-gītā takes up this point of view of the completeness that is behind this wonderful picture of creation, and a necessity that is to be there for recognising a

harmony in the midst of forces which look like conflicting powers, on account of their isolated individualities not related harmoniously one with the other. The difficulty is the excessive preponderance of one of the powers of Prakriti, at some time, on which we lean due to the force exerted upon us by one or the other of the powers.

Apart from *Rajas* and *Sattva*, the externalising and stabilising powers, there is a third condition called *Tamas*, inertia. In the language of physics you would have heard it said that there are two forces,—statics and kinetics or dynamics. There is no such thing as *Sattva* in science. It is not concerned with it, and perhaps it is not willing even to think of it. There are only two conditions of things: either they are in a state of inertia or they are dynamic and expressed in some form of activity. So we are, and everything is, in one of these conditions, and sometimes in all these conditions, working together in some sort of proportion.

We are, therefore, in a field of the opposition of these forces, which work simultaneously in the universe outside and in the personality of ours inwardly. The whole universe is a battle-field in the sense of this metaphysical description of the constitution of the universe. You will understand why the Bhagavadgītā is given in the context of a war and not in a chapel, a convent, a temple of worship. The whole universe is a temple no doubt, in one sense, it is the shrine of the Supreme Being,

the Absolute. You can adore anything and everything as God. But it is not to be done in a spirit of exclusiveness or isolation of any kind. But temporal perception works in a threefold manner presenting this picture of creation as a permutation and combination of *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. The very first verse of the Bhagavadgītā brings to highlight two important words, 'Dharmakshetra' and 'Kurukshetra',—very significant terms indeed. The universe is a field of tremendous activity, of conflict and warfare. It is also a field of justice and law. 'Kurukshetra' is 'Dharmakshetra'. There is a law that integrates these apparently conflicting powers in the same way as there is a law inside us which integrates the cells of our physical body into a wholeness of personality. Every cell of our body is different from the other. It can disintegrate, and when the life force is withdrawn from it, it dissolves itself into the five elements, it decays, decomposes itself and loses its oneness. Every thought is different from every other thought. You can think one thousand things everyday, and yet you know you are the person thinking these one thousand things. 'I thought something yesterday and I am thinking something today; though there is no apparent connection between yesterday's thought and today's thought, yet, I know that there is connection, because I am the person thinking these thoughts'. There is an integration of the psychic structure as well as the physical body. This is the '*Dharma*', the law which organises things. Law is a name that we give to the system which organises

bodies into a completeness or a meaningful wholeness, instead of their being scattered particulars or a meaningless chaos. *Dharma* is law, we may also call it justice. That which is in consonance with the system of the universe is the justice of the universe, and the way in which this justice operates in terms of the various particularities is the law,—'*Dharma*'. So there is activity, there is movement, there is change, there is transformation,—all pointing out to an apparent diversity of things. But this is not the whole truth of the matter. There is an organisation everywhere, right from the atom to the solar system. Even an atom is not a chaos, there is a balance maintained by the constituents of the atom, the electrons getting conditioned and ruled by a central nucleus, and the solar system working beautifully by the power of the Sun who organises the system. A similar power is working within ourselves, on account of which we are individuals, a completely organised body. Our personality is not a disorderly heap. We have a capacity to think consistently, logically and in an organised manner. There is a *Dharma* operating everywhere, in the whole cosmos, the entire creation, in our own self, in the atom, in everything, notwithstanding the fact that there is distraction, difference, individualisation, egoism, and externalisation. The bringing together of these two tendencies in all things is the purpose of Yoga. Neither are we to lean externally, too much on visible phenomena and be busy-bodies who have lost the soul, nor are we expected to be hibernating frogs in the

crevice of our individuality, unrelated to the outer world. The whole teaching of the Gītā is centred on *balance*, equanimity, a putting in order of everything that is not in order,—Samatva. Things do not appear to be in order or in a state of harmony because of a preponderance of this externalising power known as *Rajas*. There is struggle everywhere, in everything, at all times, a struggle to maintain a balance. All struggle is an effort towards the maintenance of equilibrium in any field of life, in any plane of existence. The laws of various types,—the governmental law, the social law, the communal law, the family law and various other systems of management,—signify one and the same thing, namely, the necessity to maintain harmony, and it has to be maintained everywhere, in every walk of life, in any given moment of time. If there is a lack of balance anywhere, in any part of our body, for instance, or in any part of human society, there is then an anxiety creeping into our experience, at once. We are unhappy if there is a little thorn pricking the sole of our foot, and our joy goes away in a second. If there is some intractable element in society, which is disturbing the peace of the minds of people, we are obliged to be conscious of its existence and are also compelled to see what means can be adopted in setting right the situation. Even a single incoherent element is sufficient to disturb the entire balance ; just as an ear-ache is enough to make you grieve the whole day. The point is that there should not be any occasion for disbalance even in the slightest manner, and the

whole of Yoga is a comprehensive approach to the situation of comic conflict which sympathetically reflects itself in every individual, also.

That conflict there is, is obvious enough. We all know that the world is wretched. We complain about the world everyday that it is stupid and it is going to dogs. We are very much concerned about the future, but we are not fully awakened to the needs of the hour and the means that are to be employed and the way we have to conduct ourselves under such circumstances. We are not in a state of Yoga. We only perceive things as they happen outwardly in the world of space and time. We are sense-ridden, entangled completely in the perceptions of the senses. We are living in a sense-world and we are wholly relying upon the reports of the senses. We do not exercise our reason and understanding to the extent necessary to counter-balance the distracted reports that we receive from the senses. Our reason is not strong, our understanding is feeble, but the senses are vigorous, they are impetuous; so we are very low in the cadre of creation. We have fallen very low indeed, while the senses are active and rebellious. The organising power in us, the understanding, is not equally powerful. You can imagine the state of affairs if individuals who rebel are stronger than the organising power of a goverment. This is what has happened to us. This organising power in us, called reason and understanding, is not able to cope up with the situation of conflict that is presented before us in experience by the senses that

work in terms of the objects outside. We are slaves to the senses and not their masters. We stoop down every moment to the level of the demand of a particular sense organ; and this cannot be regarded as freedom of any kind. Whatever the senses say is acquiesced in to by our reason and understanding, by our knowledge and education, by our culture, and everything that we have is a subsidiary stooge, as it were, to these revolting dacoits called the senses. The Bhagavadgītā does not want this circumstance to continue.

There should be a tremendous organising force, a Central Government to establish a central organising force in the whole cosmos; and, as a consequence thereof, in our own selves and in society. This is to enter into the field of Yoga. We always argue in terms of human society or human relationship and not in the light of reason and the higher understanding. We have a poor religion and a sentimental argument to justify our social conditions. But we have not got the understanding or the reason enough to awaken ourselves to the existence of the higher power of *Dharma*, of the power of God, the law of the universe, and the Bhagavadgītā takes its stand as a good teacher in a school or a college and leads us by our hand by degrees to the various levels to which we have to rise for the purpose of the real freedom that we have to achieve. The greater the operation of law and justice, the greater is its intensity of action, the greater is the freedom that we are assured. Salvation and freedom mean

the same thing, and a recognition of the law and obedience to this law is necessary in order to achieve true freedom. If we do not know how the law of the universe operates in relation to ourselves and other things, if we are ignorant of the law of our own country, how can we abide by that law? We are ignorant of the law, and so we are likely to blunder, and we are blundering everyday, and every blunder in respect of the law is to court punishment from the law. The punishment comes upon us as a grief, a sorrow, an unhappiness, an insecurity, a feeling that something is wrong.

The Bhagavadgītā places us in the context of human society at the very outset, the situation in which we are today. We are nationals of a country, and we are human beings with a relationship obtaining in mankind as a whole. We always think in terms of human relationship. It is well-known that we argue in this manner. This is the subject of the first chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, where the whole social structure is taken as the stand for the argument in connection with any action to be taken under a particular situation, and taking Arjuna as the symbol of mankind the epic of the Mahābhārata in its gospel of the Bhagavadgītā tells us how we think as individuals. We are faced with a warring situation and our activities in daily life are our efforts to face the battle. The work that we do in our office, the labour that we put forth in a factory, or any other work that we do in any walk of life, is the effort we put forth to resolve a conflict and solve a

situation. But we do not always do it properly, and so a factory-worker need not be happy, and an office-goer need not be satisfied. Our activities need not bring us happiness. We stoop down to the state of utter hopelessness and wretchedness, because we have not found time to walk with the light of reason and the justice of the universe. We cannot see this law with our eyes, just as we cannot see a government for instance. Anything that is impersonal cannot be seen with the eyes. We cannot see even money, we see a piece of paper called note or a metal-piece called coin, but money is something different. It is a value that is imbedded in the symbol called note or coin and that value cannot be seen with the eyes. The higher law is an impersonal operation and, therefore, it is not an object of the senses. Inasmuch as we are depending on the senses for our achievement and judgment of things, we are unable to take advantage of the existence of impersonal powers, reason and insight. Arjuna was in this condition. He was thinking in terms of his relationships with people, as a son of so-and-so, a nephew, etc., with ulterior motives behind. Even as we gird up our loins to do something very vigorously everyday, Arjuna got ready to embark upon a war. 'We shall do this', is our determination in the early morning of the day. So was the contemplation in the mind of Arjuna and all people on his side. They decided that certain steps were to be taken, and the decision was complete. There was a necessity to implement the decision. This implementation of the decision is the entering into the

field of battle. This is also the entering of ourselves into the field of the practice of Yoga, towards which the Bhagavadgītā will take us.



III

THE SPIRIT OF TRUE RENUNCIATION

After the brief introduction to the important features which are predominant in the whole of the Gītā, we have to enter into the main theme of the exposition. The setting of the occasion of the Gītā, the context of the delivery of the gospel, is the human situation, which I tried to liken to the atmosphere of a battle-field, an air of war, conflict and confrontation, to be expected at every step, every moment of time, and under every circumstance. The structure of the universe appears to be such that it faces us as a complex of various layers of conflict which we are supposed to overcome and which are known as achievements in life. A particular context or situation has an opposing or conflicting context or situation. If this opposition were not to be there staring at every given occasion in life, there would not be any impulse to action. There would be no necessity for any activity. There would be no such thing as achievement. Achievement is the result that follows the bringing about of a reconciliation or a harmony between a particular position and its opposition, usually known as the thesis counterposed by the antithesis. The two have to be synthesised. And the whole of the Gītā is nothing but this tremendous progressive process of

achieving larger and larger syntheses in our life, so that we become an embodiment of synthesis to such an extent that when it reaches its climax or logical conclusion, we achieve a comprehensiveness of being, which is inseparable from a universal synthesis of expanse. This may be regarded as equivalent to what you call God-realisation, or whatever you would like to call it. The aim of the Gītā is to lead you up to this universal synthesis of the ultimate balance of things. But for this tremendous achievement towards this goal of life we have to move from stage to stage, and the admonition which the Gītā gives us at different degrees of this exposition, is the Yoga of the Bhagavadgītā. Many of you, perhaps all of you, might have had a glance over the various chapters of the Bhagavadgītā. You will be aware as to what it is about. You know how many chapters there are, and what the first chapter is telling you, and what the second chapter is about, and so on. Usually, we gloss over the first chapter. Many exponents and commentators of the Gītā have opined that the first chapter is something like an introduction, and we generally pass over an introduction to the main subject of the text. But this is a mistake. The first chapter is not an introduction in the sense of a prolegomena or a preface that an author may write to his own book. Vyāsa, or Krishna, or whoever may be the author, is not giving a publisher's note in the form of the first chapter. You will be wondering that at the end of the first chapter it is designated as a Yoga: "Arjuna-Vishāda-Yoga". It is a Yoga; a

wonder indeed. It is as much a Yoga as any other chapter of the Gītā is. It is an inseparable vital limb of the entire body of the doctrine. It is a Yoga and therefore it cannot be escaped or glossed over or passed on.

The context in which Arjuna, the hero of this epic, the symbol of humanity in general, finds himself is the total human situation. It is your situation, and my situation, and everybody's. The Mahābhārata is not a book giving you merely a story of some historical events that occurred in ancient times. It is an exposition of the nature of the culture of the whole nation,—one may say, the whole of humanity. It is a teaching which is intended to show the path to humanity in its entirety, leading it up to its destination by gradual stages, and the Bhagavadgītā is the kernel of this intention of the Mahābhāraṭa epic. The purpose of the Bhagavadgītā is unique, though it is clothed in the epic colour, its outer shape is linguistic, artistic, mythological and is in the form of a narrative, but this is so because of its occurrence in the atmosphere of an epic, a heroic poem, and a tremendous heroism of a peculiar type permeates the whole of the Mahābhārata and the Bhagavadgītā. It is not a cowherd's gospel. It is not the gospel of a hermit or renunciate who abandons and cuts himself off from everything. There is a spirit in a state of ebullition and welling up into action of great consequence and moment. You will be stirred up into a tremendous urge for moving forward, as you read

through the chapters of the Mahābhārata. The Bhagavadgītā is principally a spiritual message,—spiritual in the true sense of the term. We have to clear our minds of the usual notions of spirituality and religion. When we take to such text-books of Yoga, as the Bhagavadgītā, we have to, first of all, decondition our minds and make ourselves prepared for the reception of this impersonal teaching. We are personal, and the teaching is impersonal, manifest in various stages. Ultimately it will become totally impersonal, into which the personalities vanish altogether, as if they had never been at any time. But we are hard-boiled individuals, our personality is as realistic to us as flint, and so it would not be easy for us, who cling to the status of our individualities, to appreciate and to receive into our minds the great cosmic intention behind the teaching of the Bhagavadgītā. The teacher of the Gītā knows this psychology very well. Perhaps he is one of the greatest psychologists we can ever imagine. And so he commences the teaching from the level of the ordinary human being. The feelings of man are to be taken into consideration when he is confronted or dealt with in any manner. And it is the feelings or the groups of the feelings of the individual that work themselves up into action. When we face the world or are busy with the performance of any duty in the world, our feelings guide us along a particular direction. When we are small boys, youngsters, jubilant with youthful enthusiasm, we entertain great hopes and imagine that we have great powers. We make a programme of our life.

'Such is to be my achievement in life'. But this enthusiasm is beclouded with a lack of understanding of the nature of the atmosphere in which one lives, to which fact one is awakened gradually as one becomes more and more mature. The boyish enthusiasm subsides slowly and the maturity of the grey hair begins to speak in a different language and tells us that the world is made of a different stuff altogether, from what we imagined earlier when we were not sufficiently educated in the art of living. Arjuna was such a person, and he stands as a symbol for any person, anywhere, at any time, a simple person embodying in his personality the forte and foible of anyone, whatsoever. The strength and the weakness of man can be seen in Arjuna. Everyone of us, anywhere, has a strength but also a weakness. All these points have to be taken into consideration. We should not underline unnecessarily the weaknesses of ourselves, ignoring our strengths, nor should we go to the other extreme of imagining that we are all-in-all and that we are free from every defect. We are in a world of conflicts and forces, *Rajas*, which pulls us outward in the direction of space, time and objects through the avenues of senses, and *Sattva*, which keeps us intact, integrated in our own selves and in our own status, which is the power of *Sattva* in us. The stability of our personality is maintained by the *Sattva* that is present in us and the distractedness of our life is caused by *Rajas*, which also preponderates simultaneously. And a feeling of enough with work, the getting fed-up with things, an exhaustion, a tiredness

that we often feel in life is the result of *Tamas*, the principle of inertia. All these are to be found in usat all times. We are *Sāttvika*, *Rājasika* and *Tāmasika*, at every time. Only, one of these properties comes to the surface, at a time, putting down the other two, or at least one goes down sometimes, and we appear to be in a particular mood of the hour. The mood can change, even our ideas can vary, our outlook can completely get transformed for reasons we cannot easily understand, due to the coming to the level of our consciousness these properties, one or the other, *Sattva*, *Rajas* or *Tamas*. These properties, or qualities, which are psychological and individual, as well as physical and cosmical, work in various ways and constitute not only the body of the objects of sense including our own bodies as subjects but in a subtle form make up our psychological organ, so that, as the Gītā itself would say in one place, there is nothing anywhere which is not a compound or complex of these three *Gunas*, *i.e.*, *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. Neither on earth nor in heaven can we find anything, anywhere, which is not the result of a permutation or combination of the three *Gunas*. One may be an angel in heaven, or a mortal here in this world, but all these forms are constituted of these *Gunas*. So, the human being, in the human context, finds himself in an arena of conflicts of these forces and the battle of life, so-called, is nothing but the field of the action and reaction of these forces. The battle of the Mahābhārata or any battle whatsoever, inward or outward, is the colour and the shape that these forces

put on when they commingle in the interest of cosmic evolution. They collide one with the other. To repeat what we observed earlier, there is a collision of the thesis with the antithesis for a higher purpose of the evolution of the individuality of both the thesis and the antithesis, and there is a coming together of both in a blend to form a totally new thing altogether, giving birth to a new baby, as it were, in the form of a synthesis which transcends the lower opposing categories. The context of the first chapter of the Bhagavadgītā is the atmosphere of tense feelings in the field of a tremendous Armageddon, each one imagining that one would win victory over the other, each one intent upon overcoming the other, so that each one musters in all the powers of oneself available for unleashing the same in this battle that is to ensue. The individual faces this whole world before it as a confrontation, a field of action and opposition. The child in its moods of unintelligent enthusiasm imagines that it can do anything with this world, possess it, enjoy it, overcome it, utilise it, harness it for its purposes. As we grow older we become aware of the fact that the world is too much for us. Its quantity frightens us, as the ocean can frighten us when we gaze at it on the shore. We are afraid of it because of the tremendous magnitude that is in front of us. How vast is this arena of the universe! How difficult it is to think of the powers of these five elements, the whole of nature.

Not merely that, there are other things to

which we are connected,—our social relationships. The set-up of Nature is a different thing, a consideration of which will come later on in the course of our study of the Gītā. But we have immediate problems which are related to our human relationships, more imminent and demanding greater attention from us than the powers of Nature. We may be feeling heat and cold, we may be under the pull of the gravitational power, the five elements may be there before us,—earth, water, fire, air, ether,—as terrible forces, no doubt, but they are not our immediate consideration. When we get up in the morning we are not usually thinking of the five elements, though it is true they are there as very powerful oppositions before us. We are rather thinking of immediate human relationships and other things connected with our personality, emotionally related, and the concern of today, for instance. There are loves and hatreds in relation to our connections with humanity in the immediate vicinity of our existence. When we are in the midst of people to whom we are accustomed we are not in a position properly to go deeper into the secrets of these relationships. We are living in a social atmosphere, we are living in a town, we are living in a monastery, in an ashrama, in a house, in a family, and what not. When we are living in an atmosphere of this kind, which is human and social, we cannot know our mind wholly, because the fish is in water, and it thinks that everything is fine. You must bring the fish out of water and then see the fate of it. You wrench yourself from social relations

for some time, be not in the midst of people, do not go to the shop for purchase, do not live in the town, do not have anything to do even with family relations, do not speak to anyone, do not look at anybody's face for some months. You will know yourself better then, than when in society. You will be a little bit restless in the beginning stages. You will be unhappy for reasons you cannot easily know. You will like to get up and run away into the thick of human relations once again, because man is a social animal basically. And to ignore this aspect of the human individual would be not to properly comprehened the psychology of the human being. The attractions and repulsions, the likes and dislikes in relation to personalities, are inborn in us. We are born into this circumstance. We have something to say about the people around us, for or against, we have some opinion about people, we always pass a judgment on things in our own selves. A judgment in the form of a logical conclusion that we draw in connection with our understanding in relation to humanity around us becomes the propelling force for our conduct and behaviour in relation to people. Our attitude towards people is the result of our understanding of people. We have an opinion in such-and-such a manner and therefore we have to deal with this situation in such-and-such a manner. This so-called dealing in respect of people outside is our conduct which we express in behaviour outwardly, an expression of our internal attitude or feeling psychologically. Mostly, we are tied up by ropes of

likes and dislikes which pull us in two different directions and we rarely bestow thought on the interesting feature behind our likes and dislikes, namely, that a like implies a dislike, and a dislike implies a like. They are not actually two different activities of the mind. It is one outlook, one attitude which puts on the colour or feature of a double attitude. The like which the mind entertains in respect of a particular thing or a group of things implies the exclusion of factors which do not contribute to the make-up of that atmosphere in which this thing or this group of things exists. The inclusiveness in respect of a particular situation implies exclusiveness in respect of other situations. So, as the obverse and reverse of a coin, like and dislike go together, one signifying the other, one being impossible without the other. This is, again, an internal warfare that is taking place in us, a perpetual conflict between the circumstances within us pulling us in the direction of likes and dislikes. Arjuna was such an individual. He had likes and dislikes. The whole story of the Mahābhārata is nothing but a description of the conflict among the varieties of likes and dislikes. The spiritual seeker is taught, through the epic atmosphere of the Mahābhārata and the Bhagavadgītā, the lessons of life and the morals that follow from these lessons. When our reasoning capacity is turbid, knowledge is inadequate, our adjustments with the world outside, including human society, are not strong enough. They collapse at the least touch of confronting situations, because human relationships are only an

outer form of an internal propulsion of these three forces,—*Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*,—which are cosmically present everywhere. There is a cosmic purpose behind even our individual likes and dislikes. And our entanglement in our so-called likes and dislikes is the result of our not understanding our wider involvement in a cosmical meaning that is at the base of all human situations. We always feel, 'I have a like' and 'I have a dislike', but we do not know why we have that like, why we have that dislike. Why is it that you should like this and dislike something else? You cannot give a satisfactory answer except that which is purely sentimental and emotional. But the world does not go on merely on sentiments and emotions. It is a perfectly logical system, and all the parts of the mechanism of the universe are scientifically arranged, and our behaviour outside as well as our thoughts and sentiments inside, our relationships of any kind, are conditioned by this final structure of things in general, of which we are integral parts, and the mistake of the human being in Arjuna was the incapacity to go deep into this involvement of the human individual in the larger set-up of things. It is difficult for us to imagine that we are related in a more significant manner with things in general than what appears on the surface. A son is related to the father, a father is related to the son, there is a relation between friends, etc. This is only the outer form of some of the relationships that appear to us before our eyes. But these relationships are metaphysically conditioned, cosmically organised

by an impersonal government which has no friends or foes, and which does not bestow favours on anyone. It is like a large computer system which has no friend and which has no enemy. It depends upon how you manipulate this mechanism, how you feed this system, how you approach it and how you conduct yourself in relation to it. If your conduct is in any way disharmonious with the requirement of the set-up of this tremendous mechanism, you will find that an undesirable result follows, something you did not expect. And the reason behind this unexpected occurrence cannot be attributed to any kind of error in the set-up of things, in the mechanism you call the computer, but in the mistake you have committed, in the error that is involved in your relationship, and in your not understanding properly how it works. Arjuna, and anyone, could not and cannot easily understand or grasp this circumstance. So, we have hundreds of occasions everyday to be jubilant in joy and hundreds of occasions to be sunk in sorrow. The Mahābhārata concludes with these words: "Fools find themselves in umpteen situations everyday when they can be happy, or when they can be unhappy, also." It is the stupid man, not the wise one, who sees occasions for joy in this world, or sees occasions for grief in the world. The world is not intended to bring you joy, nor is its intention to bring you sorrow. As I mentioned to you, a vast computer has no intention to give you satisfaction, nor is it intended to be there to give you any kind of sorrow. It is impersonal and it has no such

emotional meanings behind it. But human beings are emotionally composed. They are not bathed in the light of wisdom at all times. We have secret directions from impulses which sometimes appear to be irrational because they cannot be explained in a scientific manner, though ultimately there is an explanation for everything in this world. The seeker on the spiritual path is described in the first chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, Arjuna being made the spokesman of this occasion. The field of battle is the field of life. The things that you want to do in this world are the confrontations before you and your wisdom will be judged by the manner in which you deal with these situations. A situation means anything and everything with which you are connected, anything and everything that you are supposed to do in this world. And in this duty that you are called upon to perform, there is no such thing as a superior or inferior duty. There is no superior thing or inferior thing in this world, just as in a huge machine you cannot say that some part is superior, something is inferior. Everything has its role to play. Any kind of comparison or contrast would be odious in such a set-up which has no human significance but is cosmically oriented. The spiritual seeker, the *Sadhaka,* has a spiritually-oriented enthusiasm in the beginning. Everyone of us has a love for spiritual life. And the moment the idea of spiritual life arises in the mind, we find ourselves in a tremendously unspeakable situation of clinging to something and abandoning something else. This is the obvious feature in religion and in

the popular spirituality of mankind which goes by the name of asceticism, renunciation, etc. The idea of spirituality is generally inseparable from the idea of renunciation, the giving up of something for the sake of clinging to something else which we imagine at that moment as our ideal. We bifurcate one thing from the other. But the Bhagavadgītā is not a gospel of renunciation of this type. No doubt, it is fired up, right from the beginning to the end, with a surge of renunciation which will burn and burnish you into the gold of the higher personality. If at all there is any scripture which emphasises whole-heartedly the spirit of renunciation, it is the Bhagavadgītā. But if at all there is anything which tells you that spiritual life does not mean the cutting of oneself from what is real but constitutes a harmonisation of oneself with the atmosphere in which one lives, there cannot be a greater and more significant teaching than the Bhagavadgītā in this respect. While, when a particular mood preponderates in us we may be stirred into an aspiration for God, as we conceive God, and feel or imagine that we are fed up with this world, while this mood may prevail for sometime, it will subside, because this is a tentative mood which is occasioned by a particular circumstance which will not continue for all times. And when the wheel moves, when the spokes find themselves in another position, our understanding, our feelings, or attitudes change simultaneously; and we see different things altogether before us. We do not like a thing always, nor dislike a thing at all times. As years pass, our ideas of things

change. And what we loved one day may not be the thing that we love today. So is the case with the things that we disliked one day or disregarded at some moment of time. These moods of ours are relative to the conditions through which our psyche passes in what we may call the process of evolution. They are totally relative and not absolute situations. So, we cannot have an absolute love for anything or an absolute dislike for anything. They are like the stages of the healing of a disease or a wound, the recovery of health by degrees, when you begin to feel different things on different days. This is what happened to the great Arjuna, and to everyone of us it does happen. The sentiments in us are strong enough to counterblast our rationalities and our arguments though they may be philosophical or supposedly spiritual. Whatever be the philosophical profundity of our arguments, we should not imagine that our sentiments and feelings are weaker than them. They take up the case and argue in a manner which is deserving of equal attention, as the argument of the opposite party. And the arguments of Arjuna in the first chapter were the repudiation of all the feelings that he had earlier, just the opposite of what he said a few days before or a few moments earlier, perhaps. Merely because of the nature of the confrontation before us, we are repelled after a time even by the goal of spirituality, the very ideal which attracted us earlier, because our comprehension of the nature of this ideal was not comprehensive enough. One cannot keep up the sobriety of spirit throughout one's life,

because of the power of *Rajas* and *Tamas* within, whose nature one has not properly understood. The things from which we withdraw ourselves in a spirit of renunciation may demand recognition some time later, at some moment, on some occasion when they find that the circumstances are suitable for their having a say, because, usually, the religious renunciation is a misguided attitude in most cases of even so-called genuine aspirations, all because we work upon the reports given to us by the sense-organs, and to a large extent our idea of God, the idea of spirituality, the notion of renunciation, are all conditioned by what the senses tell us. What gives us pain and sorrow and that which appears to be not in consonance with our idea at any particular moment of time of what we call the spiritual ideal may be regarded as worth renouncing. Persons and things are abandoned and the world is regarded as the field of bondage. We dub it as a factory in which Satan works, from which we have to extricate ourselves at the earliest moment. Our idea of God is sensory. If you would deeply consider this theme, you will realise that we are unable to dissociate the God-ideal from sense-perception, boiled down to its essentiality. We may not conceive the God-ideal or the spiritual ideal in a physical or material form, but the sensory atmosphere does not necessarily mean a material atmosphere. It is a peculiar organisation of consciousness that we call the field of sense-activity. When I speak of the sense-world I do not mean the physical world necessarily or the material objects with which

the senses come in contact. It is rather an arrangement of consciousness by which it bifurcates subjectivity from objectivity, cuts the object of perception from the subject that perceives or cognises, and refuses to see any kind of vital relationship between itself and its object. The field of sense activity is such that the object of sense-perception does not appear to have of any kind of organic connection or real meaning in respect of the subject, so that we can whole-heartedly love something and whole-heartedly hate something, also, without any impact of it upon our own selves. This is how the senses work. But every love and hatred has some kind of impact upon the subject, because it is not true that the world is made up of isolated subjects and objects, finally. So, the war of the Mahābhārata which the great Arjuna was engaged in, was not a war against some people, merely. He was engaged in a vast atmosphere from which he could not extricate himself psychologically, a point which was driven into his mind by Sri Krishna, as explained in the second and third chapters.



IV

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE INFINITE

Though the Bhagavadgītā is regarded as a well-known text-book, it is really not intended for the ordinary man. Its teachings, its ethical principles, its ultimate aims, are all of such a nature that it is difficult to accommodate them into the normal thinking of the human being living in a world of desires, ambitions, prejudices and traditional routines of various types, all of which are cut at the very root by the altogether different outlook of life which the Bhagavadgītā presents. The more we begin to ponder over its message, the more would we find it difficult to make it a guide-line for our day-to-day life, though its purpose is nothing but that. The arguments of Arjuna in the first chapter are *our* arguments. The logic of the human mind takes this body as a final reality and everything connected with it as equally real, and the reports of the senses as wholly valid. The senses, the understanding and the logical reason are the apparatus of our knowledge in this world. These are the things that we employ in the assessment of values, and though it appears that apart from the senses we have the understanding and the reasoning, truly the understanding and reason are the handmaids of the

senses, which seem to confirm by their own logic what the senses gather as information through their perception, and they do not give us any new knowledge. Our understanding does not give us a knowledge superior in quality to what the senses provide us by sensations and perceptions. This is why it is said that we are in a phenomenal world and, unfortunately, even our reason when it is not cautiously exercised with reference to the implications behind its functions would suddenly join hands with this empirical understanding and it will amount to an acquiescence in what the senses say. And such were the arguments of Arjuna and these are the arguments we trot out when our sentiments and emotions are to be justified and are to be fulfilled by hook or crook. Setting aside for the time being the epic context and the story of the Mahābhārata, and taking into consideration the principal spiritual message hidden behind the teaching of the Gītā, we observe that the reluctance of Arjuna to take up arms on grounds of his own is the reluctance of the spiritual seeker to grapple with reality in its essentiality. We want a God suited to our senses, sentiments, feelings, traditions and social prejudices. Our reality and goal of life is conditioned by these feelings and we seem to be living for a purpose which is valuated in the light of this understanding of ours, lit up by the senses. Each one of us has to be a judge for one's own self in these matters of profound significance. Our aspirations for spiritual ideals, or God-realisation, may not be so well-founded as they appear to be on the surface. The

whole edifice of this so-called love of the spiritual ideal may crumble down when the acid test of the superior understanding and the reason is applied, and we would reveal ourselves as poor nothings who have founded our arguments of the spirit on the quick-sand of personal desire and ambition. A love for bodily existence and an affirmation of the ego, a conformity to social relationships connected with the body and the ego, sum up our satisfactions in a nut-shell. We are mortal, living in a transitional world which pretends to satisfy our desires, but never does so. But this pretension is taken by us as a reality and we ground ourselves in the justification of this pretentious promise of the sense-world and somehow or the other persuade ourselves to be satisfied with whatever is in the world as presented to the senses, and whatever the emotions regard as what is ultimately required. Though we are not always emotional and sentimental in an obvious form, we are that basically; and our very root as individuals is unjustifiable finally in the light of the larger set-up of things, which demand an existence of their own not in any way inferior to our own existence. We have a subtle and secret longing to be independent and fully satisfied even at the cost of anything and everything in the world. Consciously this does not come to the surface of our mind, but basically human beings are selfish; not merely in human beings, but perhaps in everything in the world, there is an urge to maintain oneself in a bodily complex, and the fear of death is the greatest of fears; the love of life is the greatest of loves.

Between love of one's own life and fear of one's own death, the one implies the other, and each one confirms that we regard this body as our entire property, our belonging; not merely that, as we ourselves. The social relationships are practically physical relationships, accentuated by psychic contact and adjustable with the temporary features which the world of Nature manifests in the process of history. We, somehow, manage to live in this world, by a peculiar kind of daily adjustment with the unintelligible processes through which the world passes. We adjust ourselves not merely with the world of Nature every day but, with a tremendous difficulty and strain on the mind, have to adjust ourselves with people outside us. And this strain is a great toil indeed. We are so much accustomed to this strenuous life of adjustment with the outside atmosphere that we have mistaken this effort itself for a kind of joy and satisfaction. The condition of perpetual disease is mistaken for a normal state of health. Man is never said to be, but is always said to become. We do not remain in ourselves continuously even for a few minutes. As the Buddha said in his wondrous message, everything is transitory, everything is momentary, everything is like a link connecting itself with another link. There is a procession of events, and there is nothing existent. If we are part and parcel of this transitional universe there can be nothing truly existent in us. This is perhaps the reason why the Buddhist philosophers denied that there is such a thing as the self, by which we have to understand the transitional self, the

so-called self which we regard ourselves to be in our poor understanding of the nature of things. We regard ourselves as a psycho-physical complex; body and mind combined in some manner. And this self, if it is to be regarded as our real self, certainly is not, because it is a part of our nature and it moves with the laws of nature and therefore it has births and deaths. The process of evolution is nothing but a name that we give to the continuous series of births and deaths of all things. A succession of events is another name for the death of one event and the birth of another event; which indicates the finitude of every event and of every object. Anything that is finite materially or conceptually urges itself forward to overcome its finitude by an entry into another finitude, under the impression that when the finitudes join together they make the infinite. That is why we love objects with the notion that two objects coming together will abolish the finitude of objects. But that does not happen, because two finites do not make the infinite. Even a million finites cannot make the infinite, because the Infinite is a transcendent reality which cannot be described by characters that describe the finite, and it is not a quantity which can be measured by mathematical laws. But our senses work through the space-time mathematics. The argument of logic is mathematical ultimately and while we are sunk in this mire of phenomenality and this abyss of muddled understanding, we try to entertain a spiritual aspiration, a desire to overcome the world, which is conditioned by the world. Our

longing to overcome the finitude of the world, the finitude of life, is directed by the finitude of the world itself. We are moving in a vicious circle, a merry-go-round, coming to the same point again and again, never getting out of the ruts of things. Arjuna's arguments were arguments in a vicious circle. We love God for a purpose, which is connected with this world. The desire to transcend the world of sorrow and to overcome the finitude of bodily existence is at the back of even the love for the Infinite. We appear to be longing for the Infinite for the sake of the justification of the finite, a confirmation of our longings which the senses regard as real. And social values, psychic and bodily values become the conditioning factors of even the idea of God-realisation. We seem to be loving God for the sake of people, for the sake of the world of Nature, for the sake of our egoistic satisfactions. Arjuna in a wondrous manner desisted from the battle of life, which is nothing but a battle with the world of every kind of relationship, personal or otherwise.

Now, the most difficult thing to understand is the significance of relation. We are accustomed to this word many a time, 'I am related to you, you are related to me, I am your brother, you are my brother'. This is a kind of relationship, indeed, but this is a way of talking and taking things for granted without knowing their true meaning. A relation is difficult to understand because it eludes its connection with the two terms which it relates.

If I am related to you, it is difficult for me to explain the meaning of this relation. The relation that we speak of remains merely a word with a grammatical sense, but no philosophical justification. It does not mean that I am identical with you when I say that I am related to you. If A is related to B, even in a most intimate manner, it will not follow that A is identical with B, because the difference between A and B is to be confirmed, if there is to be a relation between A and B. If A is not different from B, there cannot be relation, and the two will be one, and you would not be speaking of the two as if they are related. But if they are really different, there cannot, again, be relation. Whether with difference or without it, there cannot be relation. And so relation remains an enigma before us. The whole world is a mystery, because of this fundamental something that is conditioning our life. This is what the great philosophers sometimes call 'Maya'. We glibly translate it as 'unreality' or 'illusion', while it is a mystery which cannot be understood, but which controls us to such an extent that we are helpless totally. So the arguments based on this kind of relationship will fail in the end. In the same way as there cannot be an ultimate justification for the principle of relationship between things, there cannot be a justification for the validity of any argument based on relationships. And all logic is nothing but a structure built on relationship between the subject and the predicate in an argument. The subject and the predicate cannot be connected and if they are not connected there

cannot be logic; if there is no logic there is no argument; if there is no argument there is no justification; if there is no justification there is nothing possible in this world. So the whole thing amounts to a chaos finally. But though we appear to be living in a terribly difficult atmosphere, impossible to understand, and more difficult to live in, there is something in us which compels us to get on in this world, notwithstanding the environment that is around us which threatens us every moment of time with consequences dire. All this does not matter; we, somehow or the other, wish to live in this world even if it be hell itself. We wish to live here. The desire to live in hell is to be explained. The explanation comes only from something mysterious within us, which does not belong to this phenomenal world, but which we cannot understand with the phenomenal mind, understanding and even reason. So we are between the devil and deep sea, pulling us in different directions, something telling us something inside, and something describing another thing altogether in a different manner outside in the world of senses. The spiritual seeker girding up his loins for God-realisation, for leading a spiritual life, is faced with the complex of the world and the difficulties presented by the social relations. What about my father? What about mother? What about my sister? What about my relations? What about my disciple? What about my Guru? What about this and what about that? Now, all these are nothing but items of relationship; and the Absolute is non-relational,—call it

non-related. It is not related to anything, and to aspire for the Absolute would be to aspire for a non-relational existence. But our existence in the relational world is so tight and we are tethered to the peg of relativity with such strong ropes that we are likely to commit the error of interpreting our aspiration for the Absolute in terms of relations. This is a danger even on the spiritual path. We may like to justify everything, even the aspiration for the Absolute, God-realisation, or *Moksha*, relationally, all of which can be cast into the mould of sense-experience and egoistic pleasure. The love for immortal existence can be interpreted as a love for existing as 'this individual' for an endless period of time. People are frightened by the very idea of of the abolition of personality in God-realisation. And there are philosophies which repudiate such a possibility, because if we are abolished, what, then, remains? If the aspirer ceases to be, what is he aspiring for? This frightening situation may shake us from the bottom, and we revert, once again, to the old cocoon of bodily existence and social relationship. And the Mahābhārata war would not be! Arjuna says, 'bid good bye'. 'Here is my grandsire, Bhīshma; here is Drona, my Guru; here are my cousin brothers, all come from the same ancestor; the same blood is flowing through the veins of everyone. What can be a greater sin than to aim an arrow at the venerable Bhishma, on whose lap as a child I sat and listened to stories when I was a baby. And what greater sin it could be than to contemplate the destruction of social values, and

cause sorrow and pain to those who are related to me and who depended on me for sustenance? Am I to aim against the world which is so beautiful and grand, and which is full of such values?' The human society in which we are living is tremendously meaningful, and today we cannot see a greater meaning in life than human society. All that we are working for, studying for, day and night, is only for human society. We will know that there is nothing else in our minds. We may have organisations, we may be spiritual leaders, we may be anything. All this is for human society and not for cats and mice, or for tigers, trees and mountains. We are concerned only with our own species. A frog loves only the frog, and nothing else, and the frogs form a frog united nations organisation, and so on. We are just puny creatures with all our boasted understanding, and Arjuna's arguments really strike a very poor note before the mighty Krishna who was listening to all this.

'What a pity! A hero speaking like this! I thought you are made up of a better stuff. At this crucial moment you are failing. Having renounced kith and kin, homestead and chattel, and taken to the path of God-realisation, you are still speaking in terms of humanity, in terms of your personal immortality, and in terms of justification of the values of the world of Nature. You want to have the same satisfaction even in God?' There is a story, very interesting. Nārāyaṇa and Lakshmī were seated is Vaikuntha. Lakshmī cast a glance over

the whole world and saw a pig wallowing in a mire, eating rubbish. She was really sorry. She told Nārāyaṇa, 'What is this creation of yours? If you wish, you can give salvation to anyone in a moment; and this is the compassion that you have! Look at this poor pig. Can you not bring it back to Vaikuntha? Why does it stink in mire'. Nārāyaṇa said, 'It does not want to come. If it does not want to come, what can I do?' 'O, who will not want to come to Vaikuntha, the glorious paradise?' Lakshmī said. 'But I tell you, it does not want to come', said Nārāyaṇa. Lakshmī again said, 'Impossible! No one with sense will dislike to come to the glorious heaven of Vaikuntha.' Nārāyaṇa said, 'Well, You can send a messenger to the pig and call it to Vaikuntha'. Nārada was sent as a messenger. Nārada went to the pig, 'Friend, well, Nārāyaṇa is calling you in Vaikuntha'. The pig said, 'Narayaṇa? Which Nārāyaṇa? Where? And what is this Vaikuntha? And why are you troubling me, disturbing me'. 'No, no, no, I am not disturbing you. Why are you suffering here?' 'What suffering? I am not suffering, I am happy. I have my family, everything is okay'. 'No, in this quagmire, in this dirt, you are living. Nārāyaṇa's Vaikuntha is paradise. Immortality is what you gain there. Nectar is what you drink'. 'Nectar? What is nectar?' 'It is a glorious elixir which will make you deathless'. 'I cannot understand anything. I shall ask my Mrs.'. Mr. pig went to the Mrs. and said, 'Somebody has come and he says he is from Nārāyaṇa in some Vaikuntha, and they want us to

go there. They say we will be very happy there. What do you say?' 'But...will we...get our food there?' she asked. 'The food we eat everyday?' Mr. Pig came back to Nārada and asked, 'Can we get the daily bread we eat here?' 'O, horrible!' Nārada cried. 'You are asking for this dirty stuff in Vaikuntha? Nothing, nothing of the kind. That you cannot get. You shall have only the divine elixir'. 'Then, you mind your business. You cannot give us even our food, and you want us to starve,—in Vaikuntha? To that place you are taking us! We do not want to come, you go, go and mind your business, sir'. Nārada came back. 'I am sorry', he told Nārāyaṇa and Lakshmī. 'They do not want to come'. And, turning to Lakshmī, Nārāyaṇa said, 'What did I say?'

Well, this is a story about everyone of us. It is not merely a story to hear, it has some connection with all of us. Such is the poor understanding we have of God and such the nature of the Mokṣha that we are thinking of in our minds, in a peculiar manner of our own. Don't you think that we would like to exist somehow in this very way even in the garden of Eden, in the presence of the Almighty? And would you like to be swallowed up by the lion of God? No, that is a terrible thing! No one can gainsay that there is a basic love for bodily existence and our idea of immortality is of a long duration of existence in this very state of affairs in which we are living today. Only, we would not like to have the pin-pricks of daily life

we are trying to get over. We want to have a free hand in everything, but with the justification of this ego's desires. The attachments which were the basis of the arguments of Arjuna, mentioned in the first chapter, are the opposite of the spiritual gospel that Krishna gave in the whole of the Bhagavadgītā. Yes, Arjuna was prepared for renunciation also, if it came to that. He suggested, 'I renounce the whole thing and become a mendicant. If that is spiritual life and religion, I am ready'. Now we are ready for that, really. Suddenly we say, 'We renounce father and mother, renounce every connection with the world. We shall have nothing to do with people. We seek God'. We move from one place to another place in this very world, and satisfy ourselves that the renunciation is complete. The great renunciation which the Bhagavadgītā speaks of is not this much merely. It is not just a coming away from California to the Himalayas. It is a different thing altogether, which it would not be easy for all people to understand; and if it had been so easy we would not be bungling in our spiritual life in the way we do every day. Arjuna could not grasp it, how can we grasp it? We stumble into the same rut of thinking in spite of all our arguments and abilities and our efforts to get at the significance of true spiritual life. We cannot properly appreciate the connection that exists between God and the world, between God and ourselves and between one person and another person. And the whole of metaphysical philosophy is supposed to deal with these supreme principles,—God, world and soul,—an

understanding of whose internal relationships is supposed to be philosophy proper, ontology as they call it these days. But these principles elude our grasp because even in our endeavour to grasp the internal relationship among these ultimate principles, we commit a basic mistake, an error which worms itself into the very situation of understanding. We remain as justifiable ego-centres, we remain 'ourselves', we remain just what we are today. Even a whit of difference does not take place in us, though we are trying to lift ourselves into that status where we can comprehend the cosmic principles we are discussing in this tremendous philosophy. We are the same Mr. and Mrs., the same boy or girl, the same businessmen, industrialists, thinking of God, world and soul. So our philosophy becomes a mockery, a jungle of words, a forest of incoherent ideas, ultimately tiring and not satisfying, and we get fed up with all philosophy; because we have not been discussing philosophy really, we were justifying our own way or thinking in the name of philosophy and trying to bring down God Himself to this world of our personal egoistic relationships and compelling Him to answer to our needs that are psychological, empirical, relational, whatever they be. We are these Arjunas. And we cannot face this problem of the spirit finally. If we are cast into the fire ordeal of the requirements of true spiritual living, we would be utter failures and we would feel that none of us is fit for that life. We are just go-lucky people with an inward complacence that we are leading a religious life. But religion does not become

religion and the spiritual does not become spirituality unless our outlook in respect of the whole of life gets tuned up to the demands of the nature of God and the internal relationship that subsists among God, world and soul. There should be a harmony between our way of thinking today and the essential nature of the internal relationship of God, world and soul, as it is essentially. Though it may not be an utter harmony that we achieve, there should be at least a tendency of our way of thinking towards that requirment of ultimate harmony. Even the first step taken in this direction is a step in the right direction and is an admirable achievement indeed.

The universal has to be implanted in the particular. God has to descend into the heart of man. At least as a little iota of reality, a spark of that Fire should be present in us. Then we can be said to be set on the spiritual path. What you call the spiritual way of living is the way of God, the way of the Absolute, the way of the Tao, as they call it. Though we might have not achieved it, contacted it, or understood it fully, we should be sure of moving in that direction, rightly. Even if you move only one inch in the direction of Badarīnāth, it is an achievement in that pilgrimage. But if you move in the direction of Delhi, it cannot be called a movement in the direction of the shrine. Though it may not be easy to comprehend these requirements of spiritual life, at least there should be a satisfaction in us that we are after the Goal.

It is therefore necessary to make a thorough-going search of our own psychic nature, the world of desires which has various layers of manifestation, only the uppermost one being visible and intelligible to us in some partial manner. The lower layers are not known to us. Psychologists and psycho-analysts have tried their best to understand the deeper levels of the human psyche. These are the worlds of desires. And the predominant desire working in the conscious level may make it appear that the underground world does not exist at all. But it does exist and will thrust forth its tentacles one day, and decide everything. This is one of the reasons, evidently, why psycho-analysts like Freud thought that the so-called religion of the world is an illusion. If religion is only a complacent attitude manifest by the underground world of desires in its outer form of social piety and external adjustments of values, religion would remain an illusion, no doubt. But if religion means an entry of even the least percentage of the universal into this particular existence of ours as individuals, that would be true religion and it has no connection with the world of desires or the psyche. So there is a popular religion of the masses, the so-called pious that live in the light of human relationships, and there is the true religion of God, which is the subject of the Bhagavadgītā. This is the reason which will explain why I said at the very beginning that the message of the Gītā is not meant for the ordinary man. It requires a great alertness of our personality, the total being, to grasp its

message ; because you will realise that the message is supposed to have been delivered by the Cosmic Form which included within itself everything existent everywhere, at any time, and we have to tune up ourselves to that situation if we are to absorb its implications and proper significance.



V

THE MORTAL AND THE IMMORTAL

The First Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā pin-points the basic difficulties which a spiritual seeker may face in the long run, in spite of the preparations that he might have made with all his logical conclusions and sincerity of purpose. In the earlier stages of our aspirations we do not fully realise the problems that are hidden deep, invisibly in the outer layers of our personality, not directly connected with our daily life. We have an unconscious personality apart from the conscious one, limited to this bodily existence, and this unconscious level of ours is larger in its content than the little expression of it we visualise outside as the body and its sensory relations. There are fears of various types which keep us secretly unhappy, and many of the activities of life in the conscious level are attempts to brush aside these fears ; and we imagine that they do not exist at all. We occupy ourselves so busily with works of various types as a kind of outlet or counteracting power against these fears, usually known in the language of psychology as 'defence mechanisms'. We protect ourselves by certain psychic mechanisms which we have formed within ourselves as a kind of self-deception, we may say, finally. This is the attitude

of the ostrich as it is said to bury its head in the sand when it is threatened with any kind of fear outside. It buries its head in the sand so that it cannot see things outside, and when nothing is seen outside it thinks that nothing exists outside. This is not merely the ostrich's attitude, but, perhaps, the attitude of every human being when he is faced with insoluble difficulties. All these problems are in the unconscious level; they are not in the conscious surface. It does not appear to us that they exist at all. We are comfortably placed in a sensory world wherein the senses are fed to surfeit and they keep us completely ignorant of the dangerous abyss through which we may have to pass in the future stages of our life. We are brain-washed by the impetuous activities of the senses to such an extent that we cannot be aware of what is ahead of us, what may happen tomorrow. Because, if we can be awakened to the fact of all things that are to be faced in the future, we may perish just now with a fear of it, and Nature does not want anybody to die like that, and defeat its purpose. Nature keeps everything as a secret and lets the cat out of the bag only when necessary. Now, when the tremendous confrontation of the Mahābhārata battle was there staring at the face of the otherwise heroic Arjuna, what was unconsciously present in the human being that he was came off and spoke in its own voice. Fears which were otherwise unknown and undreamt of manifested themselves as the only realities and gripped Arjuna with such power that his personality changed completely, and he was not

the man that he was before. We can suddenly become different persons in a moment if serious conditions overtake us. Just a second is enough to transform one into a different personality altogether and one can be a personality of any type because we are everything inside us. Everything that is anywhere exists also within us. And anything can come out under a given condition. It all depends upon the particular button that is pushed, and there you have the genius coming up, as if we have rubbed the lamp of Alladin, which you hear in the stories of the Arabian Knights. Great fears overpowered Arjuna's mind like serious diseases. Doubts of various kinds harass our minds when we begin to tread the path of the spirit because of a basic misconstruing of the very meaning of the path chosen, which mistake we commit due to a lack of proper training in the art of living the spiritual life. An emotional stirring up of oneself into the enthusiasm of love of God, due to the study of scriptures or mystical texts, or listening to the sermon of a master, cannot be regarded as a reliable support for all time to come. There must be a conviction which must go deep into the heart, and as long as the head and heart stand apart like the two poles of the earth, there is the likelihood of the psychic apparatus getting out of order and throwing us in different directions as scattered pieces of our personality, so that we may lose even the little that we had earlier. This is what they call the 'fall' in the language of mysticism, religion and spirituality. This happens because we

are not studying ourselves properly and we had a wrong notion of ourselves based upon what we know through sense-perceptions, social relationships, etc. The doubts that arise in the mind later on, when you advance sufficiently on the path, can be many, but those that are recorded in the first chapter of the Gītā, as those that occurred to the mind of Arjuna, are a few. He had a few serious difficulties which he posed before Krishna. All this is the preparation for the war, the battle in which the seeking spirit is confronting Nature as a whole, and the society outside. "Can this adventure be a mistake on our part ?" "Have I committed a blunder with no proper thought ?" When you grow older in age, these doubts can come to the mind. "Is there not something different from what I am seeking just now ? I have made an evaluation of human society, my relationship with human society, and the world as a whole, and have come to a conclusion that they are to be faced in a storm if it becomes necessary. They are to be subdued and thrown out, abandoned, put down for the purpose of the achievement of spiritual victory. But is this a proper attitude ? Shall we face in a war those things, those persons, who have been our support and in regard to whom we are certainly required to perform certain obligations ? There is what is called ethics and morality, there is an etiquette and a goodness, a charitable feeling, all of which is quite different from the spirit of battle or war with the atmosphere outside. Are we to consider it friendly and accommodate it with our relationships in the

world of sense? Or, are we to fight with everything? What should be our spirit or attitude in relation to the world and human society? A spirit of accommodation is one thing and a spirit of war is another thing. Are things to be completely put down with the power of our arms? Or, can this attitude be an error on our side?"

Arjuna puts this question: "Is this not a mistake? Are we expected to face our brethren, our nephews, our relations, our grandsire, our teachers as if they are our opponents? Is the world our enemy? Are we to confront society as an unfriendly environment? This is one difficulty. Secondly, if we set this example before other people, naturally we expect others also to follow the same thing as a permissible attitude. The whole world will follow suit along this line, which will end in a chaos of the entire society, a destruction of all human values, and a defeat of the very purpose of creation. Is this not a sin that we commit? Are we to create disorder in human society in the name of a so-called victory, in the name of an idea that we have placed before ourselves calling it *Dharma* or justice? But there is another difficulty, yet. Is it certain that we are going to win victory in this battle? The world is mighty enough, and human society is very complicated in its make. Are we sure that we are to be the winners, or can it be the other way round? We may be overpowered by the powers of Nature or we may be destroyed by the ethics of society. Considering all these aspects of

the situation it appears to me that all these engagements of ours are a futile attempt. We have to think thrice before we take a step. To me, at least, it appears that there is a basic error in the entire outlook with which we have embarked upon this war". "I shall do nothing", says Arjuna, and throws down the weapon of all effort, enthusiasm and aspiration, and reverts to the level of the ordinary human being of sentiments and sense-riden satisfaction.

The difficulties mentioned, in a few words, in the first chapter of the Bhagavadgītā are not ordinary jokes or mere stories told to us for our cajolement. These things are the difficulties of human nature as such. It is not just my difficulty or your difficulty. Anyone who is human shall have to pass through these stages. Who can ever gainsay that one does not think in terms of gains and losses, in the light of one's relationship with the world outside and human society externally. We love and hate and have our ways in this complex of relationship in the world outside and in all human affairs. Where does God come in here into this picture? The notion of God has also been a very frightening factor many a time in the history of human thought. And there have been as many ideas of God as there are people in this world. There are those who denied the very existence of such a thing as God, because of the fact that there are no proofs adequate enough to convince us of God's existence. All our arguments are sensory in the end, the logic of philosophy is a phenomenal argument and it cannot touch what

we imagine to be the noumenon, or a transcendent Being, because the substantiation of the existence of anything transcendent cannot be achieved through the instrument of phenomenal reason. There are people who have been totally agnostic. God may be, or may not be. Even if He is there, it is all something impossible for us to understand with the faculties with which we are endowed at present. But more serious difficulties are those which faced Arjuna's mind, and which gradually creep into our own minds, and keep us inwardly insecure and anxious. The anxiety of a spiritual seeker is due to doubts as to the possibility of success in the spiritual path, doubts concerning the correctness of the approach which one has launched, doubts as regards the duties one owes to the world and to human society, and, finally, doubts even concerning what will happen to oneself, taking for granted that this realisation takes place. These doubts are not ordinary difficulties. They are present, perhaps, in everyone of us, in some measure, in some proportion. And nothing can be more frightening to the ego of the human being than to be told that God is All-Power and the experience of God means an abolition of individuality. No one expects this, and one keeps that situation as far away from oneself as possible, postpones it to an indefinite future and closes one's eyes to such a possibility at all. What can be a greater fear than that of losing oneself, even if it be in the ocean of God Himself. You would not want to be drowned even if it be in a sea of nectar.

Now, the sum and substance of the first chapter of the Bhagavadgītā is this much ;—a relinquishment of all effort, which originally was the spring of action of the seeking state. After years of spiritual practice one may content oneself with being the very same person that one was many many years back and lead the little life of the man of the street either due to incapacity or due to a total disillusionment here. There are several types of spiritual seekers who may have to face the same problems, no doubt, but who will be taken along different paths on account of the varying extent of the clarity of their spirits and the sincerity of purpose with which they have started the adventure of spiritual life. When your search is sincere and hundred-percent genuine, notwithstanding the fact that you have not understood things entirely, you will be taken care of by the powers of the world and you will see light rising in the horizon and a Guru or a teacher or a master like Krishna will be there in front of you and you will be placed in the context or juxtaposition of such a master by the very nature of the universe, by the very law of creation, by the very justice of God. And in the earlier stages one may be reluctant even to receive the advice of the master fully. Even when one is face to face with a competent teacher, one may not be prepared to act upon the teaching entirely. This happened to Arjuna also by a circumstance described in the very beginning of the second chapter. The great teacher told him, "This is an unworthy and unbecoming attitude on your part at this crucial moment of

time". The retort of Arjuna was, "I am sorry; however, I have decided that I am not going to take up arms. What is the good of all this bloody warfare whereby everything is going to be destroyed. Everything is going to be swallowed up by the gaping mouths of doom". Then a necessity arises for the teacher to take the disciple along the proper course and lead him up, stage by stage. A competent teacher understands the level of the mind of the student and takes his stand on that level, which is sometimes called the Socratic method of teaching. The teacher does not impose himself upon the student because a flowering of the bud of the mind of the student is essential. We cannot forcefully open it, for, if it is done, there would not be a blossomed flower. "All right", says Krishna, "I understand what you say. You have a fear that you may not win victory. You may have other difficulties apart from this, namely, the social catastrophe that may follow the destruction". Now any argument or logical approach should take into consideration what is called the 'universe of discourse'. You must know the field in which the reason is operating at any given moment of time. You cannot jump into another field altogether different from the one in which the reason operates. You argue as a citizen of the world, a unit in human society, or you argue on the basis of your being a mataphysical unit. A mataphysical argument should not be employed to solve problems which are purely social and personal, too intimate perhaps, material or physical. Similarly, purely social and economic arguments should not

be employed in the description or understanding of metaphysical realities. Everything has to be taken in the level in which it is. And Arjuna made a mistake of mixing up his arguments. He was on the one hand fear-struck with the possibility of death and destruction in the war, he might die and he might lose everything; and the question of success or victory in war does not arise if that predicament takes place. On the other hand, he had a fear from society, the fear of committing sin by way of destruction of values conducive to social solidarity. And he did not understand what would happen to him as a result of these errors that he might commit in the name of war.

The metaphysical side of human nature is in a peculiar manner connected with the empirical features. In the very beginning of the second chapter, Krishna resorts to the principle of the immortality of the soul. Do we die, really? The phenomenon of death is analysed threadbare. Who dies? And what is the meaning of death? Death is generally regarded as destruction. Does it stand to reason to say that anything can be totally destroyed? Is there a real destruction of anything? Now, destruction is the total negation of what is, and what is, is called the real. When something really exists, it cannot be called a phenomenon or a passing phase. A real thing cannot pass away, and that which passes away cannot be called the real. The real has to 'be', and, therefore, it is called the real. The unreal cannot be, and there is no necessity to

entertain any kind of fear or doubt in regard to it. Either that which dies is real or unreal. We cannot have a third alternative to imagine. Something dies, or someone dies. Is that thing or that person real, or unreal? We have to be clear in our minds when we consider this process of arguing. If you say that the thing that has died was real, then you are contradicting yourself, because, if it had been real, it could be destroyed, there is no death for it. You already declare that it is real and the real cannot *not be*, and the unreal cannot *be*. Thus, that which is, that which is real, cannot be regarded as destruc tible. If you say that the thing that has died is not real, that it is unreal, then there is no question of its death; it has already been dubbed by you as unreal. The destruction of a non-existent thing is unthinkable. And a destruction of an existent thing, also, is unthinkable; because, that which is existent cannot be destroyed, and that which can be destroyed cannot be regarded as existent. Then, what is it that dies? The phenomenon of death is visible before our eyes because of a mixing up of standpoints. This mixing up is called, in philosophic language, *Abhyāsa*, a super-imposition of one thing on another thing. You read one meaning in another and that meaning in this, and so on. That which exists is not that which dies. And that which does not exist is not that which dies. Therefore, one cannot say what dies. The process of death is one of transition, and is not a destruction of anything. A change of condition is what we call death, which is a change or transition that is required by the law of

the evolution of the universe. In fact, we die every moment. Every cell of our body changes constantly, and it is opined by biologists that after every seven years we become entirely changed personalities, physically. All the cells of the body renew themselves in such a manner that we are new beings after seven years. Not merely that; every day there is transformation as we grow. We have grown from babyhood to this adulthood of today. But we have never seen how we have grown. This process of growing was imperceptible. And, if growth is nothing but change, how is it that it could not be perceived ? We never knew that we are becoming something else every moment. All change is perceptible, visible, recognisable. But in our own case of growth, for instance, we never knew, we never recognised, we never felt that we are changing; all this because there is something in us which does not change. That character of this mysterious entity in us which does not change is the true nature of the fear of death and the love of life. Change is only a condition and not a substance; it is not a thing. It is, therfore, not a reality. But it appears as if some tremendous event takes place at the time of death, for all our practical purposes. We are horrified at the very name of death. The horrific nature of death is due to the identification of characters belonging to two levels of our being, the spiritual or the metaphysical getting transferred to the temporal or the transitional, and vice versa. The one thing is death or destruction. We see two things at the same time imagining that it is one thing and that the experience is not constituted of

two different things. There is a procession of events, a continuous change of process charged with the unitary invisibility of being which is our basic essentiality. We call it the *Ātman*, the soul, the self, consciousness, etc. There is an indestructible element in us, and that has got mixed with the condition of change which infects everything that is finite. We are imbued with the world of finites, of the bodily individuality of ours, and even the psychic isolation of ours is a character of our finitude. The finite struggles to align itself with the Infinite, to which it really belongs, and this struggle of the finite to move towards the Infinite is the whole story of evolution. Any change, any transformation, any movement whatsoever any where in this world, at any time, is a consequence of this impulse from the finite in the direction of the Infinite; and no one can remain for ever as a finite, inasmuch as the finitude of being is an unnatural state of affairs. And, therefore, the unnatural cannot always be, it tries to overcome and transcend itself and expand itself into the higher stage which moves gradually towards an infinitude of realisation. This tendency of the finitude in us towards the Infinite that is really there is the reason behind transmigration, birth and death. What you call birth-and-death, or rebirth, transmigration, metempsychosis, etc., is a necessary obligation on the part of everything that finite in the light of the all-comprehensiveness of the Infinite. We cannot maintain our individual personalities continuously intact. As a matter of fact, we cannot be the same individuals even for two seconds together.

Every moment we change and move and urge in the direction of a larger achievement. But, because of the fact that our consciousness is tethered, somehow, to this finitude of the body and mind, it appears as if the whole of our 'being' has changed. And when the change becomes so intense as to make it impossible for the mind to contain it within itself, when the change that is to take place for this purpose become marked in the sense of a total change in the form of this finitude, it appears as if our essential being itself has undergone a process of destruction.

There are two kinds of change; that particular series of changes which we pass through everyday as in the case of our growth, for instance, from babyhood to adulthood, etc., and the other one which we usually call death. While the constituents of our finitude change in the manner of a growth in a new form altogether, we do not feel this transformation or change in a marked manner, because this complex we call the body in this space-time world somehow maintains its particular form of complexity, and as we are living in a world of senses, and the senses regard this body as the self, we do not feel that anything serious has taken place to us in this frame of space-time. As long as this form is maintained we feel ourselves intact, but when the conditions of the process of evolution require a change in the very form of this finitude, and we are to be shifted from space-time order to another space-time realm, it appears that there is a total annihilation of personality.

Death is a transformation of ourselves from one space-time order to another space-time order. We move from one continuum of space-time to another continuum. It does not mean that the universe is made up of one type of space-time only. The present system is one particular arrangement of space-time and this particular body of ours is in consonance with the requirements of the order of space-time in which we are at present. When the time-series and the spatial order changes in the higher ascent of ourselves, the whole physical form has to be shed completely and a new form has to be assumed for this purpose. But inasmuch as our consciousness, thesoul, is connected with this particular bodily complex, we imagine this transformation of ourselves from one space-time order to another as a destruction of ourselves, and as destruction is fearsome, we hate death. Now, therefore, the fear of death is due to a misconception in our minds on account of a lack of understanding of what the universe requires from us. We are not punished by death. We are only educated by it. And the Bhagavadgītā gives a simple analogy to explain what actually happens in the process of death. We cast off one garment when it is worn out and put on another which is new. When we throw off old clothes and put on new ones, we do not imagine that we have lost something valuable. Likewise is the change of body, and we should not imagine that there is a real loss in death, this process being a necessity, and also because of the fact that we are entering into a new life altogether in the direction of a personal transvaluation of values

for the growth of our personalities, because the justice of God shall reign supreme finally, and the truth of the universe shall assert itself eternally. The assertion of the universe in experience are the various series of phenomena to be seen in the world. All change, whatever be its nature, throughout human history, is a requirement of the assertion of the cosmic justice, and birth and death are part of this requirement. So, "Arjuna, you are unnecessarily weeping over something in regard to which wise ones will not grieve. Birth and death do not become the causes of sorrow to people who are endowed with wisdom, who can see through things and not confine their vision merely to the outer form of the events of the universe. Your sorrow is because of the fact that your vision is limited to your senses merely, and you are unable to think in the light of the higher requirement of the law of the cosmos. Thus, your argument that death is an undesirable consequence that follows the battle of life is fallacious". And the knowledge that is positive in the light of the ultimate reality of things will follow.



VI

THE MEANING OF DUTY

The reply of Sri Krishna to Arjuna's questions comes from various levels;—the social, the personal, the cosmical and, ultimately, the spiritual. A problem has to be tackled in every way, because our difficulties arise from the depths of our being. No difficulty belongs really to merely one side of our life, just as a disease has a root in the layers which are beneath the mere physical. Interpreters of scriptures and students of philosophy are asked to take into consideration all the possible aspects of a particular situation, even if it be a commonplace event, in fact. A little event is a cosmical event; it may be a very insignificant, meaningless something, like a sneeze, for instance. But it is not so meaningless as it appears on the surface. The whole universe is awake at the birth of every event. That is why we are told that there is no such thing as a secret in this world; everything is public, open and common. An event has to be viewed from various angles of vision. Mostly, we are inclined to study things, in a one-sided manner; we study things, for example, from the political context, and interpret them only from that viewpoint, as if there is nothing else about things. Students of sociology and

psychology, again think only from their points of view. There are others, who are the religious people, who interpret everything theologically, and so on.

There is an objective universe, no doubt. The world appears to be outside us, and the objectivity of the event is also something that has to be taken into consideration. But we, as subjects, participate in the event that appears to be objective. Inasmuch as we, as subjects, participate in the objectivity of the event, there is also a subjective aspect of the event. So, no event or circumstance is wholly objective, nor can it be said to be wholly subjective. There is an inter-mingling of the outer and the inner, the objective and the subjective in the occurrence of any event. There is also a transcendent meaning inherent in the occurrence of all events. It is not merely the world and the individual that react upon each other; there is a final deciding factor which *requires* the objective and the subjective aspects to react in that manner. Often, we call this transcendence the Will of God. There is also the social side of it, because an event occurs in a social atmosphere. By society we need not necessarily mean a group of human beings. Society, in general, is an organised order, whether it is human or otherwise. And an event that occurs in an organised atmosphere has the impact of this organisation, whatever that organisation be,—it may be a family, an institution, or the entire mankind, etc. There are many other aspects which will be gradually revealed through the course of

the chapters of the Bhagavadgītā. Arjuna, as the representative man, the specimen of a disciple, is admonished by the great example of the teacher, Sri Krishna. It is, no doubt, true that every human individual, Arjuna or whoever it is, is in a social atmosphere and to argue on a basis which has absolutely no relevance to society would not be a completely valid procedure. Though it is true that a purely sociological argument is also not complete, because there are other aspects to it, yet, initially, we speak as social units. Rarely do we imagine that we belong to the vaster physical nature. Only in the philosophy class-rooms may we be thinking in this manner, perhaps; but in our work-a-day life we imagine that we are human beings living in a human society concerned only with human relations. We are not so much bothered about the five elements.

The sociological argument is the primary argument, the initial step. Have we a duty to human society? One cannot say, "I have no duty; I am the soul, the Ātman, a consciousness that is immortal, eternal, infinite". This would be a fallacious argument, because here we are trying to inject a metaphysical level into a social atmosphere, which should not be done as long as one is obviously aware of the fact that the social atmosphere is a reality. When the reality of social relationship has vanished like mist before the sun, and you cannot see it with your eyes, then, may be, you need not take it into consideration in the judgment of anything.

Anything that you are compelled to recognise as a reality cannot be ignored when any argument is put forth. And who, on earth, that is human, can affirm that one does not belong to human society and social laws do not operate? Arjuna was certainly a social being and every human being, normally speaking, is a social unit. Inasmuch as we are conscious of our being in human society and there is a give-and-take attitude of co-operation in this atmosphere of human society, we must be sure that we have fulfilled our obligations in the form of a co-operative activity in respect of society. We cannot expect facilities from society and then feel that we have no obligations in return. Let anyone think for himself, or herself. Do you derive any benefit from social relations, from other human beings than yourself? If you are sure and honestly convinced that benefit accrues from outer society for your existence and continuance in this world, you have also to pay back the dues expected from you by society in return for the benefit that has been received by you from society. In a religious enthusiasm we cannot abrogate human society, as long as we are sure that there is such a thing as society and we are in it. The other aspect is that you are an individual in a bodily encasement and you have a duty towards yourself, also. You cannot kill yourself in the name of society, nor can you kill society for your own personal advantage. These are very important things which one has to bear in mind in tackling any question. There are martyrs who destroy themselves in the name of

something other than themselves. And there are others who convert society into a martyr to fulfil the demands of their own egoism. History is an example before us. Neither can you exploit society for yourself, nor is the society expected to exploit you. You are not a stooge in the hands of social laws, you are not a puppet or a slice of human society; nor can you regard society as a slave or a means to your personal advantage or satisfaction. So you know the role of importance that society plays in the rule of co-operative living, and the importance you too have in the context of this relationship. But,—a very important 'but' indeed,—there is something more than all this. There is the universe which is not exhausted by human society. This world of nature with its birds and beasts, rivers and mountains and the solar system is not unimportant. The *Ādhibautika Jagat*, or the world of nature, externally visible to us, in which we are located, is not in any way less significant than human society or your own personal individuality. You are expected to co-operate and collaborate with the world of Nature in as efficient a manner and as dexterously as you are expected to perform the duty in respect of yourself and human society. There is a supreme duty that you owe to the Creator of the universe. The Ātman within you is the symbol of the Absolute that is everywhere. So when people speak of *Ātma-sākshi* and regard the innermost self as the witness of all things, they bring God into the picture of the judgment of all things, who sees everything with His millions of

eyes. Just imagine how difficult it is to live in this world in a successful manner! So, all these aspects are to be borne in mind. These aspects mentioned to you are, as known in Sanskrit technical terminology, the *Adhiyajña* level, the *Adhyātma* level, the *Adhibhūta* level and the *Adhidaiva* level. There is a fifth aspect which is generally not mentioned in the commentaries on scriptures. This is what is known as the *Adhidharma*—the Law, the Righteousness of the Kingdom of God, as the New Testament has it. The Kingdom of God is the *Adhidaiva*, principal spiritual Reality. The righteousness thereof is the law that operates in the universe. The Vedas speak of this righteousness as the *Satya* and the *Rita*: the Absolute law and the cosmical operative law. As in the constitution of a democratic republic, especially of India, there is a super-departmental power vested with the President, for instance, while there is a departmental law operating through the Prime Minister, one not completely dissociated from the other and yet one having a significance of its own independent of the other; likewise, is the 'Satya' and the 'Rita' spoken of in the Vedas. The *Satya* is the super-departmental Absolute principle, you may call it the basis of all law, and the way in which it operates in a particular context of creation is the *Rita*. And one has to abide by this law. I have been telling you many times that 'law' has a very vast connotation, not easy to comprehend, because it has various degrees of manifestation and action.

Sri Krishna in his reply to Arjuna, refers to all these aspects, so that the answer of Krishna is a complete encounter to life. He does not leave anything un-said, because the problem of Arjuna was a total problem and not something that arose from a side of his personality. You would ask, what is meant by a 'total' problem: It is a difficulty that arises in the entirety of the personality;—socially, physically, vitally, mentally and intellectually. Earlier we made mention of the difficulties Arjuna had in his mind in respect of his duty towards human society. He was doubting the consequence that would follow from his engagement in the war. It would be destructive of all moral, social and ethical values ; a sin, in a sense. But not merely that. Arjuna was in a worse condition, still. His whole personality was shattered. He was not thinking like a sane person at that moment. The organisation of the personality had given way completely; there was a tendency to disintegration of his individuality. He began to say, "Oh! my body is burning, the hands are trembling, the hair is standing on its end, the head is reeling, the mind is unable to think, my reason has failed me". And what remains in a man, then! Everything is gone. He lost control over everything that he had within himself, and everything that he was. All the five layers of his personality, or the "Koshās", —the "Annamaya", "Prānamaya", "Manomaya", "Vijñānamaya", "Ānandamaya", the physical, vital, mental, intellectual and causal being, —all things were shaken from their roots. It appeared that the whole edifice

was crumbling; and under those circumstances, what opinion could he express about anything? It was all a bungling, a fumbling and an erroneous viewpoint taken by him.

Such is the fate of a spiritual seeker, also. We are studying the Bhagavadgītā as a spiritual gospel, a great torch-light before us in treading the path. It is intended principally for everyone as a seeker of God, for the salvation of spirit. It is not merely history that we are studying or a legend that we are recounting. It is clothed in imagery and mythology and epic magnificence, but its essence, the core and the kernel is pure impersonal spirituality. "So, Arjuna", says Sri Krishna, "You have a duty towards human society, you have a duty to yourself, you have a duty to the world, you have a duty to the *Antarātman*, the deepest Self within you which pervades the entire Cosmos. Now, human society is based on mutual co-operation. We have, what are known as the 'Varna' which is wrongly translated as 'caste' in modern times; it is not caste but a classification of society, the better translation would be 'class' and not 'caste'. The classes of society do not imply the category of inferior and superior. They imply, on the other hand, a necessity of co-operation on the part of every unit of this classification. There is a necessity to maintain oneself materially, economically. We know very well the importance of one's economic existence. There is no need of a commentary on this. But what is economic life except production and consumption?

So there is a necessity to work for the production of material and economic values for the sake of the consumption thereof, by which human beings sustain themselves materially, physically. We will have to work hard for this, it means that. Now, again, it does not mean that everyone will have to do the same work. The entire mankind would otherwise be concerned only with production of material goods as if there is nothing else of value in life. That is also not true; that would be a wrong interpretation of human history and society. There is an economic interpretation of human history now-a-days which is a misplacement of values. We are not merely bodies, we are not merely food-consumers, we are not merely money-holders; we are something more, as we know very well, each one of us. Apart from this necessity to live in an economic atmosphere so as to produce economic values, we have also the need for protection. The need for organisation and enactment of laws is the need we feel for a government of human society. At least the Contract Theory in political science accepts that the origin of government is in a mutual agreement and contract of people for protection of themselves in a particular manner. We have organised a government; we wanted it and have created it in a particular way for our own welfare. The government exists for the people. This function requires another class of people, apart from these who are the producers of consumable goods. But, then, we cannot simply produce goods and keep them in a corner. There is a necessity to organise the transference of

these economic values. In the beginning it was the barter system that prevailed in economic society; now we have currency, etc. Whatever it is, the principle behind exchange of money or goods implies the necessity for the movement of goods which requires a third class of society to operate it. And finally, and the most important thing which cannot be missed in our activity towards these obvious visible ends, the most important conditioning factor, —the knowledge how to handle things,—comes in. Whether it is the handling of administration, whether it is the handling of the atmosphere of production of material good or the transference of goods, etc., you cannot have power without knowledge. You know how dangerous it is to be vested with power and strength when you lack in understanding or knowledge. So there are the four classes of people who have been specially endowed with this responsibility of conducting themselves in various levels of human society. And Arjuna belonged to one class; and everyone of us belongs to some class or other. If you will not perform your duty expected of you in that particular atmosphere or class in which you are placed, you would be a derelict, a renegade, a selfish person who exploits people for the benefit of yourself, and that should not be an example that you can properly set before others; —highly objectionable is this attitute. "So, Arjuna, even from a sociological point of view, you are mistaken in your notion of "I shall not act". "If everybody says, 'I will not do', then what will happen? Is this the example you wish people to follow?

Secondly, what has happened to your mind and intellect ? How is it that you appear to be fumbling and falling off ? Is this the way an integrated personality will speak ? Are you healthy and sane in your personality ? Will a wise person succumb to this catastrophic conclusion which you have arrived at just now, at this moment of crisis, here, in this battlefield of Kurukshetra ? What a pity, and a tragedy ! Does this become of a hero like you ? You have lost your personality. And you take that as the basis for your argument which affects the human society also in which you are living. Society has sustained you, and you have a duty towards it".

Now, we move further on. The world of Nature is that which highly conditions your experiences in life. Heat and cold, hunger and thirst are all processes which are engendered by the movements of the powers of Nature. You have to bear with fortitude the results that follow by your placement in an atmosphere of physical Nature. You should not say, "How horribly is it hot ! How wratchedly is it cold ! How stupidly is it raining", etc. These are statements which convey no sense. Nature performs its duty regularly and perfectly, and our complaints arise because of our maladjustment with the way in which Nature works. Nature is an impersonal computer system. It does not go wrong. It appears to us that it is going wrong sometimes on account of our not understanding all that is behind its workings. So, the physical universe is

also a reality which expects of you some duty. The *Pancha-Mahā-Yajñas*, as they are called in the system of living, in India particularly, are the obligations that you owe to the various sides of life; to human beings, to your ancestors, to the gods in heaven, to the sages of wisdom, and even to the beasts and animals, you owe a duty. Much more than that, we seem to be connected with still greater realities. We owe a duty even to the planets and the Sun and the Moon. Traditional systems require us to offer prayers to the Sun everyday. The *Gāyatrī-Mantra*, which every religious person in India chants with reverence, is an offering of prayer to the mighty Sun whose existence is our life. If you study the cultural and religious history of India in all its facets, you will be wonderstruck that it is nothing but *Yajña*, sacrifice, service, co-operation and self-abandonment that is taught in the culture of this country. Perhaps this is to be the essence of every culture that is truly humane. You have duties, not rights in this world. This is something interesting. People fight for rights and do not think that they have duties, these days. "This I demand, and I owe nothing to you". This is modern man's argument. But true human culture tells that you have duties but no rights. You will be wondering what is all this about. "I have no rights?" Dear friends! Rights will automatically follow without your asking for them. When you perform your duties, you need not demand your rights, they come spontaneously. "All these things shall be added unto you", if you "first enter the Kingdom of God

and His Righteousness". Why do you cry for rights? Seek God and His righteousness, and then see if everything follows you or not. But you expect everything to follow you automatically without your doing anything for it. This is unbecoming. This is not going to lead you to success. So, Sri Krishna speaks: "You have a duty towards all things, and you cannot simply throw your bow and arrows and say, 'I do nothing, I perish'. You have no right to perish even, you must know that. You cannot hurt others, yes; but you cannot hurt yourself, too. Just as you cannot kill others, you cannot also kill yourself. Just as you cannot attack anything in hatred, you cannot attack yourself. There is sacredness and sanctity present everywhere, and reverence for life is the insignia of true culture". Arjuna forgot everything. He was completely down with fear, doubt and weakness of every type. At a particular stage in our spiritual pursuits, we find ourselves in this dark night of the soul, as the mystics speak of this condition. We cannot see anything in front of us. This plight does not befall us in the earlier stages of spiritual life, when everything seems bright as day-light. In the earlier days of spiritual practice, we think that everything is clear to our minds, and we can go ahead. But when we go half-way, we see darkness ahead of us. It is all problem, difficulty and diffidence and we begin to grope in darkness, in which condition Arjuna finds himself in the first chapter of the Bhagavadgītā. Inasmuch as this darkness is a precedent to illumination, a darkness that has risen

on account of our persistence in the practice of true spiritual life, this specific condition of being in darkness and doubt is also called a 'Yoga'. So, the first chapter is called "Arjuna-Vishāda-Yoga", the Yoga of the dejection of the spirit of the seeker. This is also a part of 'Yoga'. And everyone has to pass through this stage. But we should have the strength within us to realise that it is a transitory stage and it is not going to be an all-in-all; it shall pass away. So, from the first stage of darkness and oblivion, Arjuna is lifted up to the enlightening message of the '*Sankhya*' to which we shall refer now.

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VII

THE NATURE OF RIGHT UNDERSTANDING

We have covered practically the whole ground behind the meaning and the context of the First Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā. We had to take so much time in covering the field of this one Chapter as it lays the foundation for all further thought and understanding which will follow through the coming chapters. We had occasion to observe that the background of the First Chapter is not simple and not so very introductory as it is generally made to appear. Rather it has a value in preparing the ground for the edifice of the teaching. I am sure, you will be able to recollect the various stages of thought through which we had to pass in understanding the profound significance of 'The Yoga of the Dejection of the Spirit', which is the title of the First Chapter. The dejection, or the mood of melancholy in which the representative man, Arjuna, found himself, has been described as a spiritual condition. That is why even the so-called dejection is regarded as a part of Yoga. It is not a morbid condition of negativity or an earth-bound attitude, but a necessary condition of positivity in its most initial stage, the task which a spritual seeker has to take upon himself

when he girds up his loins to encounter the universal Reality. The darkness which one faces at the very outset is the cumulative effect of the tremendous inward preparation which has already been made through the earlier stages of self-investigation, study and reception of knowledge from various avenues in the world. But an explanation has to be offered as to why this dejection arises at all, which comes in the form of an answer given by Krishna in a few verses at the commencement of the Second Chapter. The point made out is that the understanding is not clear enough. The knowledge which is designated as the *Sāmkhya* is lacking. There is a turbidity of the intellect and a misdirection of the ratiocinating faculty, which situation supervenes on account of the reason of the human being itself getting contaminated by the prejudices of the psyche, from which it arises, as it were, like a tendril from a seed. Who can gainsay that our rationality or logic is to a large extent conditioned by the structure of our personality which is located in a phenomenal context of the universe and everything that devolves out of this phenomenality ? The term *Sāmkhya* that is used in the Second Chapter is the knowledge which is supposed to be in consonance with the nature of Reality, and that which is dissonant with its nature is the opposite of it ; it is the absence of knowledge, or *Sāmkhya*. What this knowledge is will be told to us in the Third Chapter, — what it is to be endowed with *Sāmkhya*, or correct understanding, alongside of which we will also know what is meant by wrong understanding.

The immediate reaction of Krishna, the Teacher, to the predicament of the psyche of Arjuna is metaphysical, and it takes into consideration certain aspects in the course of the argument. The sudden answer which comes as an immediate reaction to the various arguments posed by Arjuna is that the soul of the individual is essentially immortal. The fear of death, and destruction and catastrophe which harassed the mind of this human representative in Arjuna,—all these problems are out of point on account of the essence of being or the basic fundamentality of the individual being indestructable. There is no such thing as destruction, ultimately, of anything that exists. There cannot also be a destruction of that which does not exist. This is simple logic which is the encounter that comes forth as a flash of light from Krishna upon the mind of Arjuna. The fear of destruction was one of the points raised by Arjuna as a counterblast against the injunction that engagement in war is necessary. This argument of Arjuna received a reply in a short passage which makes out that destruction of reality is not possible. That which is, always is; and that which is not, cannot be under any circumstance. Now, when it is said that something is destroyed, one does not properly understand what one is speaking. There is only a change of form; the name-form-complex undergoes a transformation in the process of evolution in the universe. But even in this transformation a total destruction of any element does not take place. There is a decomposition of the parts and a rearrangement of the parts

in a particular manner under a given condition. And when one lacks the knowledge of this peculiar process through which everything passes, one regards it as a destructive process or death. Hence the fact being that the essence of everything is immortal,—we call this essence of things the soul of things,—there is no need for entertaining the fear of such a thing as death. If death that seems to be imminent or impending is the retarding factor in one's engaging oneself in any action, this fear has to be shed immediately because there is no death of the essence of the personality of the individual. But if it is the fear of the destruction of the form or the name-form-complex, it is inevitable, and no one can escape this possibility, because the finite can never rest in itself forever. Death becomes necessary because evolution is a necessity. And death is nothing but a name we give to the process of the passing of a thing from one state into another state, into another thing as we usually call it. So, there is no fear of the death of the essence of the individual and there is no escaping the chance of undergoing the transformation of the name-form-complex which is called the death of personality. Hence, either way there is no cause for grief. What is inevitable has to be accepted, and to weep over the inevitable is absolutely without any significance and is to no advantage whatsoever. You cannot avert the possibility of this transformation which everything has to undergo as long as it is located as a finite entity in the realm of space-time-cause relationship. But if it is the soul that you are speaking of, it cannot be destroyed.

So this is a metaphysical point, a highly philosophical issue which is the answer which Krishna gives to Arjuna's query. But this is not the only answer.

The individual is not merely a metaphysical entity, though it is also that. We have noted in our earlier studies that the individual is also a social unit. There is a large society of individuals and the relevance of the individual to this social atmosphere is also to be taken into consideration when any judgment is to be passed at any time. There is a duty of everyone in respect of the atmosphere in which one is placed. This is called the *Dharma* of the individual in respect of society. *Swadharma* is usually regarded as one's obligation towards the society in which one is placed. And we have observed what this society is. It is not merely the human atmosphere that we are referring to as society but everything that is around us which cannot be exhausted merely by the human world. The whole universe becomes an atmosphere later on, and we seem to be owing a duty towards this vast expanse of the universe which touches us on our very skin in various degrees of its manifestation, including what we call human relationship. Thus, from the point of view of the ultimate nature of Reality, from the standpoint of one's connection with the society around, as well as the interest of one's own self ;—from all these angles of vision, if we consider the duty of a person, it appears that no one is free from duty of some kind or other.

So, inaction is unthinkable. And even the decision not to act is also an action. Thus, the action-bound world compels everyone to be active in some way. But wisdom consists in understanding the process of connecting one's activity with the whole to which it belongs, and any kind of selfishness or emphasis of one's own particularity or finitude in the process of engaging oneself in an action would not be a Yoga but a passage to one's bondage. Bondage is the consequence that follows from action which arises from non-understanding of the vital connection of one's self with the whole to which one belongs. And freedom is the opposite of it. So action is finally not an individual's initiative merely. It is a part of the total purpose of the universe as a whole And not to understand this would be the absence of *Sāmkhya*, or knowledge. "I have explained to you what *Sāmkhya* is", says Krishna. The details of the *Sāmkhya* would be touched upon in the whole of the Second Chapter. Now we are only getting into a little introduction or inkling of what this *Sāmkhya* could be. This *Sāmkhya* has to be applied in daily practice. This knowledge has to become a method or procedure of conducting oneself in daily life. This implementation of the knowledge of the *Sāmkhya* in one's daily life is called *Yoga.* "Now I shall tell you what Yoga is, after having told you something about *Sāmkhya*".

Knowledge is the precedent to action. The way in which we have to behave, conduct ourselves

in this world, the method of action, is the knowledge thereof. Theory and practice go together. Knowledge and action are inseparable. Yoga is not merely action in the commonsense meaning of the term, but action proceeding from the *being* of a person, and the action becoming more and more comprehensive and complete as the dimension of the being expands itself gradually in the process of the practice of Yoga. "Even a little of this practice is a great credit to you" ; — "Nehābhikramanā śo sti". There is no loss of any sort in this glorious encounter of the soul with the Absolute. Every bit of endeavour in the right direction is going to be a credit-balance, however meagre that balance may be. One should be happy that some good has been done. And everything is good if it is done with an understanding of the *Sāmkhya*. It ceases to be the good and it becomes a way to one's bondage only when it is bereft of this background of knowledge. We have only a duty and we have no right to expect any fruit out of the performance of duty. This is the great ringing tone of the teaching of the Bhagavadgītā. This is something which the modern mind cannot easily understand, which is sunk in the mire of expectation of fruits even before the seed is being sown. We are always after the rights that we have to expect from world minus the duties that we seem to owe to the society in which we are. You cannot expect the fruits of your action, there is a great mistake in this expectation, because the fruits are not in your hands while action is obligatory. Even to take a common example of sowing

the seed in a field, look at the work of the farmer; he does his duty very well, but you cannot say that the fruit is entirely in his hands. Many factors which are out of his bounds go to contribute in the production of the result which is the harvest that he has to reap. There should be rainfall, there should be the proper weather condition, and many other things, as you know very well. The fruit, the result, the consequence, of an action is decided by factors beyond the comprehension of the human individual and therefore to expect a particular fruit would be the height of ignorance on the part of any person. We suffer because we expect a particular consequence to follow from a set of actions that we perform, and those results we expect do not follow on account of the simple reason that there are other conditions to be fulfilled for the production of the result than merely the initiative taken by the so-called agent of action. I as an agent, the so-called initiator of the action may be one of the factors. Yes, accepted. But I am not the only factor, and to consider myself as the sole conditioning principle behind the production of the result of an action would be ignorance, and that would be the absence of *Sāmkhya*, knowledge. Hence we are told again and again, throughout the teaching, that it is highly improper to expect a fruit. All that goes to constitute the universe in its entirety has something to say in the production of the result of even the least of actions, and we are not the only deciding factor. There is a 'bench-of-judges' as it were, and it is not only one judge that

decides the case, here the 'bench' being a very large one constituted of innumerable judges. This wondrous knowledge becomes a source of great solace and peace to the mind, and it remains equally rooted in success as well as failure. The words success and failure are applied by us as a kind of judgment upon the nature of the results of action. But we are not supposed to pass such judgments because success and failure are not to be regarded as the criterion of the correctness of an action, because, success and failure are our valuations, from our own standpoints, and not necessarily from the total standpoint of the purpose of the universe. Again, there can be a so-called failure in spite of all the efforts that we have put forth and that should not be a source of dejection of our mind, provided we have done our best. Nor should there be any kind of unnecessary exultation on account of a so-called success, merely because it is in consonance with our pleasures and predilections. 'Sukha' and 'Duhkha', pleasure and pain should not be the judging factors in the performance of an action. We have to be cautious in seeing that the action is performed in as impersonal a manner as possible freeing it from the intrusion of individual agency or doership as much as possible. All actions, finally, are cosmic actions and they appear to our actions, or my action, on account of the misunderstanding of the causative factors of any action. Yoga is the balance of attitude which consciousness maintains on account of the presence of the *Sāmkhya-Buddhi*, or

knowledge behind the performance of duty,— "Samatvam Yoga ucyate". And this equanimity or poised attitude of consciousness in the performance of a duty or action accelerates the process of the action and one becomes dexterous due to the element of impersonality that is present there. The more are you unselfish the more are you capable of executing a deed in the proper manner. Dexterousness or adroitness in action is Yoga,—'Yogah karmasu kauśalam". An expertness in action is Yoga, an expertness that follows from the equanimity that is behind the performance of an action. Thus, Yoga has been defined in a novel manner in the Second Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, not necessarily in the way in which we people take it usually. Yoga is impersonality of approach and not merely the isolated hermit-life of an individual performing breathing exercises or sitting in postures of the body, etc. It is not the Yoga which the Bhagavadgītā emphasises, though the importance of this aspect of Yoga also will be touched upon in one of the Chapters that is going to be explained later. The Yoga of the Bhagavadgītā is very comprehensive. It regards life itself as Yoga. The way in which we have to live in this world is Yoga. And this way or manner of living may involve various requisites or preparations. They may all be necessary conditions in the fulfilment of the vast achievement called duty in life.

We have also noted that rights follow duty automatically. To ask for rights would be redundant

in the context of things, because, the privileges of the individual are necessary results that follow from the correct performace of duties and we are anxious about our rights on account of the incorrectness of the performance of duty,—a selfishness that creeps into the so-called performance of duty, wherein placed the individual ceases to be performing duty altogether. The value of the performance in the form of duty lies in the extent of the unselfishness that is behind it, the impersonality of the ground on which it is rooted. The larger the self that performs the action, the greater is the unselfishness behind the action. What you call the selfishness of an individual is the attitude of the limitation of the self involved in the visualisation of things. There are grades of selfishness and grades of unselfishness, too. In comparison with the higher stage the lower stage may appear as selfish. Hence, in the advance of consciousness through the process of its evolution we will find that there is an ascending degree of the concept of unselfishness. And the particular degree of unselfishness which determines an action will also determine the nature of the result that follows from that action, so that when an utter unselfishness or a total abolition of personality is behind the performance of an action, that action is no action at all. There we see inaction in action, when the so-called action is motivated by a complete annihilation of the consciousness of individuality. That is called Cosmic Action, if at all, we can call it an action. Thus, *action* and *being* commingle at a particular stage, so that *existence*

itself becomes action. But this is a very remote possibility, the final end of things, the absoluteness which the self reaches when it is supposed to have attained liberation, by which we mean the freedom of consiousness from finitude of every kind, in which condition placed the self of an individual becomes the Self of all beings,—"Yena sarvam idam tatam", that Self of ours pervades the selves of all beings. And, therefore, the performer of action, if it is to be regarded as the self, should be considered as the Self of all beings, so that everyone is doing that action and not 'you' or 'I' as so-called privileged individuals, encased in a body-mind-complex. This is the sum and substance of the *Sāmkhya* and the *Yoga* expounded in the Second Chapter of the Gītā, amounting to a precise answer to the complicated question which Arjuna raised in the First Chapter. And, inasmuch as the question of Arjuna arose from the various levels of his personality, the answer also has to be equally relevant to those levels from where the questions arise. That is the reason why the Bhagavadgītā is not exhausted merely by the Second Chapter, though, for all practical purposes, it appears as if we have given a suitable and complete answer. We have laid the foundation for a correct and complete answer but the details shall follow in the Chapters to come. Our problems do not arise merely from one level of our being, as the homeopaths tell us that the disease is not merely in the physical body. It is a total organic condition and unless the root of it is dug,

out the disease is not cured. The whole of the Bhagavadgītā is the panacea, the remedy, the medicine that is prescribed as an antidote to the diseased questions which arose from the disintegrated personality of humanity in general represented in the individuality of Arjuna. We are also told towards the end of the Second Chapter how such a poised person conduct himself in this world into which details we need not enter here, because they are obvious from what we have studied up to this time. Everyone of you would be able to understand how such a perfect person would conduct himself in the world. There is no necessity to offer a commentary thereon. Everything would be welcome, everthing would be all right. All shall be for the best for that person who has ceased to be a person any more. That person has become an 'imperson' and therefore everything is welcome and everything gets absorbed into the impersonality of the person, the genius of an individual. Just as every river is welcome to the ocean and it absorbs all the waters into its bosom, such is the comprehensiveness and the charitableness of the impersonal person, the Sthitaprajña, the perfected individual of the Second Chapter of the Bhgavadgītā. One with established understanding, whose consciousness does not flicker or waver when the winds of the world blow over it,—such a person is a spiritual stalwart, known somtimes as the Jīvanmukta in the language of the Vedānta philosophy. What a wondrous message we have in a single Chapter ! And what a wondrous problem

we picked up in the First Chapter! Duty is the name of this wisdom charged admonition of the great Master of the Bhagavadgītā, Bhagavān Sri Krishna.

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VIII

THE YOGA OF ACTION

The famous doctrine of Karma Yoga is the theme of the third chapter of the Bhagavadgītā. This is one of the most difficult sections in the whole text and a very important one which provides the key, as it were, to an understanding of the basic principles of the whole message. It was stated earlier that action should be grounded in understanding. This was the point made out in the Second Chapter. Now, what does it mean? How is it possible to root activity in understanding? This is expounded in the Third Chapter. There are certain misconceptions prevalent in the minds of people in regards to activity. For instance, often times we feel that we are fed up with activity. We can withdraw ourselves from action as such, and remain inactive and do nothing. There are occasions in life when people feel like doing nothing. And the Bhagavadgītā's answer is that this is an impossibility. There is no such thing as doing nothing, because of a very important reason, *viz.*, the activity of the universe. The universe is ever active, and it can never be inactive. A person, any individual, anything for the matter of that, which is a part of the universe, has no freedom to maintain

an independence over the prescriptions of cosmic lews. The way in which any individual has to conduct himself, the manner in which anything has to behave in this world, is decided by the law that operates in the universe as a whole. And for you to say or for me to say that I shall do this, or, I shall not do that, would be a complete misplacement of the understanding, The universe is not separable from the individual, and vice versa. In as much as there is nothing inactive in the universe and no individual can be inactive, there is no chance of any person maintaining a silence in regard to activity. The idea of inaction arises on account of a misunderstanding of the nature of action. We feel that, if our hands and feet do not move, or if we do not speak a word, we are inactive. But action does not necessarily mean the movement of the physical limbs. It is a vibration that we set up in ourselves and in our atmosphere by the process in which the constituents of our individuality conduct themselves. Every cell of the body is active, and our mind is never inactive. To think is to act. And to be really inactive would be to cease to think. And even in the so-called mental inactivity of deep sleep the mind is subtly active in a different manner. The psychology of sleep will reveal that the mind is not really inactive even in sleep. There is no occasion concievable when we can be totally inactive. Right from the minutest atom up to the highest concievable galaxy one cannot see anything sitting idle or being inactive. This is one of the aspects of the reply of Krishna to Arjuna's decision not to act. There is

no such thing as 'no action'; your action is inseparable from your being. Every finite entity is active on account of the very finitude of itself. Action is the necessary consequence of the finitude of entities.

One would wonder why should everything be active. Why is it that the whole universe is evolving and moving towards something? What is the matter? The matter is simple. The finite struggles to overcome its limitations, because the essential nature of the finite is not finitude. We are not finite entities really speaking and the consciousness of finitude is attempted to be overcome by the activity so-called, involving what we know as evolution. No action can be isolated from finitude. The vibration set up by every finite individual or entity is the action thereof. We are made up of various layers of personality and every layer is vibrating with a tendency to overcome the limitations of finitude, with an urge to move onward, forward, for the realisation of a wider finitude, a more comprehensive one, with the final intention of a total abolition of all finitude by an establishment in the Infinite. Until we are established in infinitude, we shall be active and, therefore, there is nothing in all the universe that can be regarded as really inactive. Inaction is a misnomer, and the absence of initiative in action in a physical form cannot be regarded as inaction. To be thinking actively and to be inactive physically is condemned vehemently in the very beginning of the Third Chapter. It is not only a hypocritical attitude on the part of the individual but a false approach

to realities in general. That would be the opinion of the Teacher of the Bhagavadgītā in regard to people who are physically inactive but mentally active. Mental action is real action. Your bondage or your freedom is in the way in which your mind works, and not in the manner of the movement of the physical body merely. So the substance of this essential point about action is that everyone is active and everyone has to be active on account of the very structure of the universe.

But, then, if we are compelled by the law of the universe and have to be acting in some manner or other, we appear to be helpless tools in the machinery of the cosmos. Are we such? Or have we some freedom? What is Yoga? If bondage in the form of this compulsive activity cannot be escaped under any circumstance, what for is any endeavour? To this the answer is the principle of Karma Yoga. While Karma or action binds and can bind, Karma Yoga which is transmuted action cannot bind and will not bind. The binding type of action is a whirling of the individual centre within its own cocoon towards the apparently conceived fulfilment of a personal objective or ulterior motive. But there is another kind of action which shall not bind. And that is designated in the Bhagavadgītā as 'Yajna-Karma', action performed as a sacrifice. In a mythological style, in the form of a beautiful image, Krishna says that the Creator produced the individuals in the early days of creation, with a message to everyone.

The great God who created us seems to have spoken to us thus, at the time of creation, "Children, I have created you, but I have created you together with a duty". To be born as an individual is also to be born with a duty inseparably. If we are to be free from duty, we have to be free from individuality itself. So, when we were born as individuals at the time of creation, in the origin of things, we have been sent by the Creator with a commission to perform a duty in the form of *Yajna*,—"Sahayajñāh prajāh srishtvā purovācha prajāpatih; Anena prasavishyadhvam esha vo'stvishtakāmadhuk";—a famous verse which sums up the principle of spiritual action. Individuals were created together with the principle of Yajna, or sacrifice. The obligation to perform a duty is a call to sacrifice. And action performed as a sacrifice becomes a divine worship, and it shall not bind. Any action which is performed without the spirit of sacrifice involved in it but with the selfish intention of the fulfilment of an individual or personal motive shall bind and bring sorrow to the individual.

Now, what is this Yajna, or sacrifice, with which we are born, and which is the message given to us by the Creator in the earlier days? What is this Yajna in whose spirit we are expected to perform action or do our duties? This is something very crucial for us to remember. The concept of Deity is brought forth as an important item in the understanding of the nature of sacrifice. The word 'Deva' is used in the following verse which speaks

of co-operative action as the form of every type of sacrifice. The *Deva* is a superintending Deity. "May you be propitiating the gods (Devas) by means of your actions, activities or duties, and in return may the gods bestow upon you their blessings". This is a mythical form given to an important scientific principle or a philosophical point involved in the performance of any action. The binding character of action consists in the neglect on the part of the so-called performer of the action in regard to a principle that is inseparably involved in the performance thereof. I have mentioned to you on an earlier occasion that we are not the sole agents of action and that it is not true that everything is decided by us. The agent of an action is not one single individual, on account of which the fruits cannot be expected by us. The important invisible factor which conditions actions of every kind is what is termed the Deity or the 'Deva', in this context. There is a spiritual guiding element existing as an intermediary reality between the apparent individual agent of action and the fruit that is to accrue therefrom, the motive with which the action is performed and the ideal towards which activity is directed. Our actions are directed towards some end ; this is the nature of every action. It is a means to an end. Now, this end is remotely placed away from the agent of action, and there is something in between, in the middle of the agent of action and the end aimed at through that action. That principle which is in between is the 'Deva' the Deity, the god, the spiritual conditioning factor,

an ignorance of which is the cause of failure in the fulfilment of any purpose. To be ignorant of this principle is to be ignorant of the whole process of right action. The performance of worship, in religious parlance, to gods, to deities, angels, or whatever you call them, implies an inward attunement of ourselves with a transcendent principle which lies between the subject and the object, yourself and the end which you are aiming at. God Himself is descended, as it were, in one degree of reality in the context of our existence, in the level of reality in which we are, and to be ignorant of this fact is to be ignorant of the existence of God Himself. In one degree, in one form of intensity, God is present between you and that which you are aiming at through your performances. But we are ignorant of this secret. As we are involved in space and time, we are phenomenal individuals, our consciousness is not resting in itself, but is moving through the appertures of the senses externally towards the objects located in space and time, we are unable to be conscious of the presence of this spiritual element as a transcendent reality between us and the end of our actions. We cannot see God with our eyes because of the fact that God is Absolute-Consciousness and our consciousness is thrown out of ourselves with the force of desire which rushes with a tremendous velocity towards the object of desire. Desire is our bondage, action is not the bondage. Any desireful action is binding, desireless action is free. To be desireless, again, is not an easy thing, because even as every finite entity is inseparably

involved in some kind of activity, it is also involved in some sort of desire. The desire of the finite is engendered by the incapacity of the finite to rest in finitude. We ask for freedom from finitude, that is our desire, and we have no other desire even when we ask for small things,—it may be a cup of tea,—what we are asking for is not that little drink but a freedom from the agony of finitude, the sorrow in which we are sunk by the limitations of our personality. That we cannot tolerate. We want to overcome the limitation by some means. So we run to shops, go on trekking, climb mountains, go to circus and cinema, and we do all sorts of things not for their own sake,—that is a mistake in our minds,—but for the sake of achieving an illusory freedom from finitude. It is illusory because we are here following a wrong course of action and even this illusion of the little transcendence of finitude gives us a titilation of satisfaction. That is why we are running after the things of the world. We are fools of the first water. And so we are after the things of the world, and we obey the orders of the senses. But we cannot be conscious of what we are really intending at the base, at the root of our personality. We are not asking for the objects of the world. That is not our intention, that is not our desire. Our desire is infinitude, nothing short of that, but the senses cannot allow us to think in this manner, they are dupers of a very strong type, they are dacoits who pull us in erroneous directions. And the consciousness is caught up in this vehement activity of the dacoity of the senses.

And that is the source of bondage, not action. Krishna enlightens the mind of Arjuna, "You are mistaken, my dear friend, in saying 'I shall not act'". What does poor action do to you? It cannot harm you. It is an impersonal requisition of the law of the cosmos and in the obedience of yours in respect of it, you shall not be bound, you shall be rather liberated, because the activity of the cosmos is towards the liberation of the spirit. It is not intended for binding you, for the whole of creation moves towards Self-realisation finally. You may call it the realisation of the Absolute; towards that end the universe is evolving and we are dragged on as when we are in a railway train which is moving. The whole cosmos is a vehicle rushing in a tremendous speed towards Universal Selfhood, the great Ātman of the Cosmos, the God of Creation, the Absolute, the Brahman. This being the case, it will be highly improper and unbecoming on the part of a person to think in terms of little finite desires, and to work for the fulfilment of those tinsels or petty ends forgetting the great purpose behind even our little desires and actions. Hence, perform action with this consciousness of its being a sacrifice of your individuality, gradually, by degrees towards the larger purpose of the consciousness of the Deity that it transcending both you as an agent and the end as the limited object outside. This synthesis between the subject and the object is the Deity.

There are degrees of Deity. That is why

sometimes it appears that we have many gods in religion. They are not many gods, for they are the many degrees of the same God in various levels of manifestation. The gods of religion are not really gods. They are various levels of the appearance of the One Supreme Godhead operating as a synthesising principle at different levels of synthesis between the subject and the object. When we practise Yoga, in the sense of the requirement of the Yoga of the Bhagavadgītā, we are moving from one level of finitude to a higher level of it. The finitude gets diminished gradually as we ascend further on. But we cannot step over the present state of finitude and enter the higher dimension of it until we enter the Deity which is transcendent to our present state of finitude. That is the meaning of worship in the religions of the world. This is the adoration that we offer to God, and that is what we call the 'Devata' or the 'Deity' of worship. It is a higher consciousness of our own self. It is our own higher self calling us, it is not some other god sitting in the heavens and beckoning us. There is no outside god. The true God is inside us. And our own higher level is wanting us to rise up, to wake up, and enter into it. If we are conscious of this higher principle present in us, as a transcendent element containing within itself not only our persent finitude but also the finitude of the objects we are wanting to acquire through our desires, we have overcome the limitations of the present opposition between the subject and the object. We have won a victory in the war of the Mahābhārata

and there are eighteen days of the war, says the Epic. May be there are eighteen stages of the ascent, and it is difficult to imagine what stages there are, how many steps we have to climb to win the last battle.

So, at every step we confront one deity on the way. At every step we are performing a sacrifice, or *Yajna*, in the form of the surrender of our present finitude. "Arjuna! My dear friend! O humanity! Children of God! This is the principle of correct action, or right action, here is explained Karma Yoga in its essentiality, when you perform an action as a necessary condition of overcoming your present finitude in the interest of the realisation of a higher reality in the form of the 'Deity', the Deva and it shall bless you". Religions tell us that we should worship gods, and that the gods will bless us. This blessing is nothing but the union of our lower consciousness with the higher, transcendent one, which includes our present finitude as well as its finite environment. Here is the philosophical significance behind the doctrine of *Yajna* propounded in a few verses of the Third Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā. This action, this Yoga of performance of duty, takes off the edge of sorrow in one's life, because, here one does action as a dedication rather than as a means to an ulterior end. Again, here, we are brought face to face with an understanding of the nature of the fruits of action. There is no such thing as a fruit of action in the sense we conceive it. If action is selfishly performed the

fruit thereof shall be a reaction, and every such reaction of action is unpleasant in the end, for every selfish action is an interference with the balance of things, the harmony that exists amongst the objects. And Nature as a whole tries to maintain its equilibrium; it cannot tolerate any kind of interference from any part, it resents all interference with it and the moment we touch it in the form of an action selfishly motivated, it expresses its resentment in the form of a reaction that recoils upon us as the *Karma-phala* or the fruit of the action, which is grief and rebirth. We suffer due to our own deeds. But it is not necessary that all our deeds should bring only sorrow. We can also be happy and our deeds can be vehicles in which we can ride over the finitude of ourselves and rise above to the higher realm of the deity which is situated beyond the ken of our sensory perception, and which is a greater reality than the imagined reality of the state of our present finitude. The senses move towards the objects and this movement of the senses towards the objects is usually regarded by us as action or activity. We imagine that we do something. We have always a feeling that we are doing something and we have to do something because of an absence of right knowledge, Sāmkhya, the wisdom that should guide all activity. The senses move towards the objects outside not because of a real desire for the objects as such, but because of an inherent affinity existing between the senses and the objects. Outwardly it appears as if we are desiring the object, but inwardly the intention of Nature is

different. Only, we are unconscious of this inward intention of the movement of the senses in space and time. There are the three *Gunas*, or properties, of what is called Prakriti—*Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. These Gunas are the building bricks of everything in the universe, whether in our own self or outside in the world. All these five elements,—earth, water, fire, air and ether,—all the physical objects in the world, and everything that we are in ourselves in the physical body, even our mind and the sense organs are constituted of *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*. These properties which are the constituents of Nature as a whole, individually as well as externally, try to maintain a balance among themselves. That is the reason why the senses within which are the products of the three Gunas try to commingle with the very same Gunas present as objects outside. "The properties move among the properties (Gunāh guneshu vartante)". It is not you that touch an object, it is not the sense organs that crave for a thing outside; it is the Gunas that are trying to commune with the Gunas that are outside. It is one wave in the ocean dashing against another wave, as it were, in the very same ocean. In this ocean of forces known as *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, the individuals are like waves, and every object is such a wave. So one wave collides with another wave due to the affinity one has with another on account of the basic similarity of structure which is the ocean at the bottom. Now, our actions, our activities, our duties, whatever they are, are not really our actions, our duties, our performances.

They are the performance of the Cosmic Powers, *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. They are doing something in an impersonal manner for a universal purpose. And we, unnecessarily, ask for a credit for this impersonal activity of someone else! We are a result of the comminging or the permutation and combination of *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* in some degree and all the objects of the senses also are of a similar nature. Thus, the whole universe is working without any sense of individuality within itself. It is doubtful if the universe is aware that we exist at all as isolated pieces. But we are hard-boiled 'persons' demanding total independence of our individuality. This is perhaps the meaning of the Biblical story of the Fall of the angel from the Garden of Eden. It is the assertion of the individuality; Lucifer became Satan. The angel has become the individual with a flint-like egoism asserting independence from God and claiming equal rights with God Himself. This is the travesty of affairs in the history of the individual. One who knows this secret cannot be bound by action. But people have no awareness of the inner meaning of action. In the verses of the Third Chapter we have the basic principles of Karma Yoga stated; how we have to conduct ourselves in this world. We have to move in the world not as human beings at all; a true Yogi, in the sense of the Bhagavadgītā at least, is not a human being, a spiritual seeker conceived in the light of the Bhagavadgītā is a spark from the divine conflagration of God-Being, seeking union with its universal Selfhood, or absolute

comprehensiveness and our conduct has to be in consonance with this great purpose of our existence here. Our existence in this world is teleogically conditioned by the purpose of the cosmos and we are here for the fulfilment of this great purpose, the divine design that is behind the entire panorama of Nature. I do not exist for myself and you do not exist for yourself. Nothing exists for itself. Everything exists for everything else. This consciousness of the fact we exist for everyone and that everyone exists for everything else is perhaps the height of the consciousness of the democratic administration prevailing in the universe. When everything is for everything else, and nothing is only for itself, where, then, comes the binding character of activity? The question does not arise. Neither is it possible for one to sit inactive, doing nothing, for the reasons already mentioned, nor can action bind one if one is truly awakened and has an insight into the meaning of existence.

Why are we worried, then, asked Arjuna. What sorrows us? Why does one commit sin? How are we anxious at every moment of time in spite of this great truth that is revealed by you, Krishna? What is the mystery of this sorrow? What is the secret of the grief of anyone, notwithstanding this universal fact of all things? "Desire is the secret of the sorrow of the individual". You have no other enemies in the world; your desires are your enemies. You attract enemies from outside on account of the magnetic activity of your own

desires inside. As a magnet pulls iron filings toward itself, a particular distracted form of the psyche attracts positive or negative reaction from outside. Your friends and foes are the inward conditioning of your own psychic fluctuations, they are not outside you. Unless desire is subdued, sorrow cannot be averted. How can we overcome desire? This question is answered in a precise manner in two very important verses.

The question has been raised as to what it is that obstructs our endeavours in the right direction in spite of our having grasped, to some extent, the structure of the cosmos, such that we are inseparably connected with the whole creation and any notion of agency in action individually is a total misplacement of values. There is no such thing as an individual action inasmuch as the universe is an organic whole and there is a 'total action' taking place everywhere. The so-called individual efforts are part and parcel of the effort of the cosmos towards the realisation of its great purpose. Having understood all this, how is it that we seem to be prevented from moving in the right direction? What is this mystery? Krishna's answer is that desire is the obstacle, anger is the obstacle, greed is the obstacle. This is another way of saying that the intensity of the ego-sense is the obstacle. Because desire, anger, greed, etc. are various modus operandi of the ego of the individual. How could we get over this problem, if this is the case? If the ego is so hard, if it is bent upon having its own way, and desires

are so insatiable, and anger is unavoidable, greed is a part of our nature, what is going to be our fate? This is another question that follows from the earlier one. Again, the great answer comes from the Master. It is difficult to control the senses by ordinary means. Any effort at the subdual of the sense-organs by force of will, will not be successful, ultimately. Like restive horses which are unwilling to pull the vehicle, like violent bulls which cannot be horned with ease, like ferocious beasts which we cannot approach with impunity, are the senses very impetuous, wild in their behaviour, incorrigible in their character. And if we apply force, they may appear to be controlled for the time being, but suppression or repression of desire is not control of desire. The so-called repression will have a reaction in an undesirable manner. The unfulfilled desires will wreak vengeance one day and catch us by the throat and demand their dues in a more vehement manner than they would have done under ordinary circumstances. What is the way? The sublimation of desires by the art of Yoga; not the repression or pushing down the impulses into the sub-conscious;—that is not the way of Yoga.

Higher than the senses is the mind. Higher than the mind is the intellect. Higher than the intellect is the *Ātman*, or the pure Spirit within us. By a resort to the higher faculty the lower can be restrained. But a lower method cannot be applied to the lower impulses when they are working parallelly. A little bit of psychological satisfaction

born of understanding is necessary in order that the impetuosity of the senses can be mellowed down. The senses are vehement on account of the fact that their movement towards the object outside in space and time is due to a reason quite different from the one which they have in their minds. Mainly, it appears that our problem is lack of sufficient understanding. We rush towards the objects of the senses with a wrong intention, a wrong view about the objects. It has been observed earlier that the properties of Prakriti are pulled towards the properties of Prakriti. It is a kind of balance that the properties of Prakriti are trying to maintain among themselves, in which process the movement of the properties within the individual towards the presence of the very same properties in the object appears to be a desireful action on the part of the individual. An understanding of this truth has not been driven properly into the perceptive and cogitative faculties of the individual. Hence a deepening of the understanding, the *Sāmkhya*, that we have referred to, is necessary. Meditation is nothing but this effort of ourselves to resort to our higher levels in order that the lower may be absorbed into the higher, which process is called sublimation. The senses are, in a way, the functions of the mind itself, which forcefully ejects its tentacles through the appertures of the sense-organs as a heavily filled pot with the holes at the bottom may permit the flow of the liquid inside it with a force equal to the volume of the content thereof. The mind is tremendously energetic. And

the energy of the mind cannot be bottled up. It has to express itself either by way of sublimation in the process of its ascent to the larger dimensions of its being or it has to exhaust itself by moving horizontally towards objects outside. But it cannot rest quiet without doing anything. The movement of this energy towards external objects is not the proper utilisation of this force. We become weaker by sense activities by way of contact with objects, by indulgence in enjoyment. But we become strengthened by the sublimation of the force; and the higher we go the stronger we become. The instruction of the Teacher is that the senses have to be sublimated in the mind, the mind has to be drawn back to the intellect or the reason and the reason is to be rooted in the *Ātman*, finally. The rootedness of ourselves in the *Ātman* which is the Spirit of the Cosmos, is the ultimate panacea for this malady of sense-activity, desire, anger, and the like. We come to this conclusion that we have to take refuge in the ultimate Reality of things. The Spirit of the Cosmos, which is also the Spirit within us, known as the Ātman, is the remedy for the ills of the senses, the mind and the intellect. The Third Chapter concludes with this much of message to us. But we are still highly dissatisfied. We are not consoled adequately. All this is a terrible process, indeed. We felt that it is not easy for us to feel our unitedness with the Cosmos outside, the internal relationship that we bear to the things externally. Now we are told something, more difficult still.



IX

THE DIVINE INCARNATION AND GOD-ORIENTED ACTIVITY

It was told us that desire is the obstacle, and it is again told that desires are so powerful that they cannot be easily subdued unless we resort to the *Ātman*, the great Reality. Is this an easy method ? Is anyone going to succeed in this practice ? We are weak in our understanding, no doubt. feeble in our will, and forceful in our desires. Under these circumstances, which are obvious to everyone, is there a hope at all of any substantial achievement, spiritually ? Or, are we merely groping in darkness ? Is it a hopeless case ultimately, if we are so fragile in our understanding and if the powers of the world are so far above our head and shoulders ? Now comes a highly solacing message in the Fourth Chapter, where we are consoled by the paternal instruction and secret that things are not so bad as they appear. All this tremendous technique of the practice of Yoga detailed in the Second and Third Chapters may appear to be hard for everyone of us. But we need not be disappointed or dejected in our moods. God is the Supreme Viewer of the whole Cosmos. The Omniscience and the Omnipotence of God are of such a nature that we as units inextricably

involved in the Being of God will have the occasion to receive His Grace, for God moves in this world in the form of His Incarnations, manifestations, expressions, functions and activities. There is a great truth behind the working of things, which is more incomprehensible than what is available to our understanding. We are reminded of the interesting exclamation of Hamlet that there are more things in heaven and earth than our philosophy dreams of. We may rack our heads and try to understand the mysteries of things, and find that everything is a hopeless affair. We can understand nothing, finally. Yes, this may be true when we view things from one aspect, but there is another aspect, which is equally important, if not more important than the other one, *viz.* the power of God which surpasses the force of anything in the world. And the presence of God is immediate, and not just a remote possibility, as it may appear to our present way of thinking. God is not a future, distant, possible achievement. He is not a transcendent Creator, unreachable, unthinkable and ununderstandable. God is also deeply present inseparably from our essential essence; our soul, our self, is basically related to the Supreme Absolute. So the law of the Absolute operates in ourselves and equally so in all things everywhere. The manner in which God works in this world is what is known as the Divine Function of the Incarnation. The way in which God descends, as it were, to the levels of the various degrees of the cosmos is the Incarnation of God, whose function

is to trace back all particulars to the universal, the Absolute. The Incarnation is a symbol of universal integration. The Divine Incarnation is an individual symbol of a universal purpose. Divine Incarnations are considered apparently as individuals but really they are universals. We are told often that they walk on earth with their feet planted on the physical level, but their heads move in the heavens. The Incarnations are universal beings and they are super-human in their knowledge and power. The distinction between an ordinary individual and a Divine Incarnation is this, that while the individual is confined in its consciousness to the operations of the sense faculties, the mind and the intellect, the Incarnation has an intuitive perception of the inter-relatedness of all things and there is a vision of the Absolute perpetually before the eyes of the Incarnation, notwithstanding the fact that it appears to have descended to the level of the particular individuals. Thus, it is difficult fully to understand the meaning of an Incarnation. We do not know how it happens. Even today we cannot easily say what it actually is. It is a miracle. Finally, one would realise that the whole thing is a miracle. Our logic has to fail in the end, a very feeble prop, which appears to be guiding us to a certain extent, but in the end it leaves us as an unreliable support. And our search for God has to be a function of our soul within, rather than an activity of the intellect or the empirical understanding. Religion is a function of the soul, it is not philosophical or academic

intellection. And when we come in touch with God's Presence even in the minutest manner, we become religious, and as we have been hearing oftentimes from great men that religion starts where the intellect stops. And religion in this sense is the working of God within us consciously, though unconsciously He works even now, in everything. We are asleep to the function of God in us. When we become awake to this working of God in ourselves, we have become religious. An unconscious movement is not to be regarded as religious action. It must be a conscious purposeful movement of the soul towards God, and the recognition of His presence in all things, as His Incarnations. Whenever there is a crisis in this world, God is supposed to incarnate Himself. This is a ringing message of the Fourth Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, in verses which are often quoted by spiritual aspirants and religious practitioners. The responsibility of God over the universe is much more than our responsibility in regard to anything. And He is perpetually active, timelessly putting forth effort, as it were, for the redemption of the universe into His Being. And what we are required to do is only to accept the Presence, ask for God, seek Him from the recesses of our being, and we shall find Him. We require faith rather than mere logic. And when faith is firm enough, when our search for God is sincere, when we believe in God whole-heartedly, and do not merely give a lip-sympathy to His Presence, when we cease to be professors of religion, but become embodiments of the religious conscious-

ness, when our whole being accepts that God is, which is another way of saying that we should have faith in the working of God, religion takes possession of us, and this stage, where we become truly religious in the proper sense of the term, is the condition of the Saint, or we may say, the Sage. Here we have the highest religious message given to us in a very few verses in the Fourth Chapter, touching upon the compassion of God upon the whole humanity, the universe in its entirety, the mercy that God showers upon every being and the instantaneous action of God at moments of crisis, suffering and extremist movements in the wrong direction, away from the centre of God's Being. Whenever such a catastrophic direction is discovered anywhere in the world, God takes an instantaneous action in a timeless manner. That is how an Incarnation works and we need not be disappointed that we are weaklings and that we cannot understand. More than understanding is an acceptance of this feeling for God, the Presence of God. Faith transcends reason in a way, and religion is finally a faith of the soul, a spirit, a surrender of one's self, which shall be the final message of the Gītā when it concludes in the Eighteenth Chapter, a total submission of ourselves to the Presence of God by an acceptance of His being whole-heartedly, from our soul. This is the highest religion, and God's Grace shall be bestowed upon us as a matter of right, and we need not be in a mood of melancholy or dejection of spirit.

Now, with this great solacing religious message which is offered us in the Fourth Chapter, at its beginning, we are also introduced into the need for activities in consonance with this message, with this state of religious living. The emphasis that we find laid everywhere throughout the Chapters of the Bhagavadgītā is that we should not suddenly imagine that we are in the topmost level. We have to be cautious in recognising where we stand at any given moment of time. And the Gītā makes it clear that, according to it, Yoga is the establishment of harmony in all the levels of being. There is nothing superior or inferior in this world. Everything that God has created has a value in its own level, or stage. And the level in which we are now is also equally valuable, and its value has to be recognised by us, we cannot reject it as if it is not there. Our action, our conduct, our movement and our behaviour in the particular atmosphere in which we are placed has to be one of harmony with that atmosphere. This is Yoga, and the need to understand the way in which we can conduct ourselves in harmony with the atmosphere is stringent. And what is this action which has to be performed in such a manner that it is in harmony with the movement of things outside in the given atmosphere ? When the harmony is established between ourselves and the environment outside, our actions cease to be actions, they become movements of Cosmic Power. Action, then, becomes non-action ; one can see action in non-action and non-action in action. Our intelligence has to rise to that level where

we should be able to recognise inaction in action and action in inaction. When our so-called actions are set in tune with the movements of things outside, action becomes non-action. It is as if we are doing nothing, because we are moving in harmony with the whole pattern of the environment outside, with which we are connected, and of which we are a part, organically. When we are in union with the laws of the universe, our actions are not our actions. They are laws operating in themselves in an impersonal manner. But there are other actions which appear to be non-actions while they are really actions. For instance, people are often under the impression that when they can keep quiet, doing nothing, they are in an inactive state. We have referred to this matter earlier on another occasion. There is no such thing as keeping quiet. As long as we are individuals, as long as we have a feeling, a conviction that we are a body, a psycho-physical entity, the universal is far away from us, and we are cut off from the atmosphere. We have a desire of some kind or other ; we are human beings and we cannot convince ourselves that we have any kind of organic connection with things outside. Under such conditions inaction is impossible. And even when we keep quiet imagining that we are doing nothing, we are doing something, because the mind is acting, and mental action is real action,—that is the source of bondage as well as freedom. But, when action is performed as a *Yajña*, or sacrifice,—we have to recall to our memory what sacrifice is,—then all our efforts and

movements are sacrifices of the self in the knowledge of this unity of ourselves with things, performed as an adoration of the deity which superintends over our actions as a transcendent principle existing between us and the atmosphere outside ; such action is sacrifice, and such action is no action. And it melts like a piece of snow or iceball before the blazing Sun. The so-called binding noose of action breaks, as if it had not been there at all, and is burnt in the fire of knowledge. This is knowledge, wherein the individual that performs the action, the end toward which it is directed, the process of this action,—all these appear to be one continuous movement of a single Reality, like the dashing of the waves in the ocean, one colliding with the other, the waves and the process of their collision and that which is connecting them together, all being one mass of water, and the very force of this water. The action is dedicated to the Absolute, and we ourselves as individuals, as the source of action, are a part of that Absolute, and the process of the offering of ourselves through the medium of action is also a working of the Absolute itself,—Brahman. The aim or the objective of this action is also the Absolute. It is all a movement of the universal force of God-Being within itself as every movement of the waters in the ocean can be regarded as the single movement of the root of the ocean itself. This is the *Yajña* described in the Fourth Chapter as compatible with action in this world. Knowledge-based action is Karma-Yoga. So, there is an

exposition in this Chapter of the way of the combination of action with knowledge. It was told in the Second Chapter that knowledge is necessary and action has to be rooted in it. The imperative was declared there. And how actions are not our actions really was mentioned in the Third Chapter. Now, how this action can really be rooted in knowledge, how this performance has to become a practical day-to-day affair in our life, is explained in the Fourth Chapter. This particular section emphasises the necessity to behold a unity between activity and knowledge. Often we make a distinction between the two, and no one can help making this distinction. We can never believe, ordinarily, that knowing is the same as acting. And so, under a misapprehension that the two are different, we take to a way of knowledge severing ourselves from action or activity altogether ; or, otherwise, we go to the other extreme and plunge into activity without proper understanding or knowledge. Action is to be the movement of knowledge itself. Again, to bring the old analogy, the waves have to be the ocean. The knowledge of the structure of things has to be not only the root, the base of our actions, but this knowledge itself has to become a movement in the form of action. What we call activity is the movement of our being, it is not something outside us, as the rays of the Sun can be said to be the movement of the power and force of the Sun itself. Our efforts, our endeavours, our conduct and behaviour and action in this world are a spatio-temporal expression of our own being.

When this spatio-temporality is cut off from the movement of our being, when we do not any more regard ourselves as helpless victims at the hands of this isolatedness in space and time, we, then, become a universal being participating in the purpose of the Cosmos. Then it is that we receive the Grace of God, for God is non-spatial and non-temporal. God's actions are not individualised movements towards some uterior purpose. Human beings as we are today in this condition, we will find it difficult to understand what all this means. Religion is not an easy affair, and Yoga is not meant for all, unless one is prepared wholly in one's being towards this completion of one's life's purpose. We are, therefore, required to prepare ourselves for this arduous task in the form of Yoga. We have not to forget the messages of the earlier Chapters when we go further. The Chapters in the Bhagavadgītā are not water-tight compartments. There is an ascending series of thought, a connection vitally between one Chapter and another, and though it may appear often that the one repeats the idea of the other, the repetition so-called is only with a different purpose and with a different significance and not a mere tautological mention of the same idea. We have to recast our mind back to the very conditions of the First Chapter, as if we are preparing for an examination on a particular subject, wherein we go on muttering within our own minds the earlier stages of our studies when we go ahead through the further chapters of a text-book, so that we may not forget

the earlier one in our absorption in the later thoughts therein. There is a continuity of thought and a wholeness of purpose motivating the entire message of the Gītā throughout the eighteen chapters, even as there is a continuity and an organic wholeness in the various processes of our development from babyhood to adulthood and maturity of feeling in our own physiological personality. We do not give up our baby-body when we become adults. We have only grown into maturity in a large wholeness and knowledge and power when we become adults and matured persons. So is the system followed in the methodology of the development of thought in the various chapters of the Gītā. Thus, the Fourth Chapter gives us two important aspects of the message of Yoga. Firstly, that God's Hands move in this world as Incarnations which cannot be counted in number. It is not that there is only one Incarnation historically. Every event in the world is a divine miracle beyond the understanding of the human individual. And this divine miracle is the working of the Incarnations so-called. The Incarnations have various degrees of intensity in their workings and are in that particular shape or form which would be required under the circumstances of the case. Hence it is that we see a diversity among the messages of the prophets and the Incarnations accepted by the various religions of the world. They are not diversified really. They appear to be so on account of the diversity of the needs of the circumstances which necessitated their descent,

even as various types of medical prescriptions may be required in different cases presented before a medical practitioner. It does not mean that the prescriptions are all cut off one from the other with no relation among themselves. There is a relation, but they appear to be unconnected on account of difference in the cases. So, while there is an apparent disparity in the teachings of the great leaders of religion and the Incarnations accepted by people, the so-called differences are only on the surface. The intention is the same. They come from the same source for the fulfilment of a common purpose. Finally, we may say that there is only one religion in the whole world, which manifests itself as various religions on account of the vehicles through which it functions, according to the times and climes of the world through the history of the universe. Such is the first message of the Fourth Chapter, a great and wondrous miracle of God working as Incarnation in the various events of the world, at all times, perpetually. The other message of the Chapter is that we have to perform, perforce, action as integrated beings in the structure of the universe, basing it on a knowledge of the wholeness of things and our basic relationship with the environment in which we are, so that Karma-Yoga becomes more and more intensive as we rise higher and higher in the level of our comprehension, so that when we realise God, when we enter into the being of God, when we are established in the wholeness of God's Being which is called realisation of God, action becomes

knowledge in the literal sense, so that the two do not exist even in thought or memory ; action is being, and being is action ; God's existence is the same as God's activity, and God's activity is the same as God's existence, as distinguished from what it appears in our own individual level.

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FORMS OF SACRIFICE AND CONCENTRATION

There is another important theme expounded in the Fourth Chapter, viz., sacrifice as a practice of Yoga, in which context certain details of the variegated methods of the performance of this sacrifice as Yoga are delineated. The adoration of the gods, the celestials or the deities of religion is a sacrifice. And any sacrifice is also a Yoga, because sacrifice means a parting of one's own self in some measure in the direction of the achievement of a larger Self, so that in every form of sacrifice a lower form of self is surrendered or sacrificed to a higher form of Self. Whenever the mind fixes its attention on something other than itself, which is supposed to be wider in its comprehension than the contemplating mind or the self, that process is to be regarded as a sacrifice. A lower principle has to be sacrificed for the sake of a higher principle. Contemplation on a diety, as we conceive it, is the aim of religion, wherein the surrender of oneself in such a contemplation is implied. This is one kind of sacrifice, a religious performance, and it is Yoga, because it is the union of the lower with the higher by means of adoration. The surrender of the lower self to the higher Self is regarded as *Brahma-yajña*, *Jñana-yajña*,

—sacrifice of knowledge, or sacrifice in knowledge, or through knowledge, for the sake of union with the larger Self which is a manifestation of Brahman, the Absolute. When the senses are withdrawn and fixed inwardly, a sacrifice is performed, and this is also a part of the practice of Yoga. When the senses are concentrated on objects which are regarded as helpful in the sublimation of desire, a kind of sacrifice is performed for the realisation of a higher good. When the powers of the mind, the intellect and the senses, together, are centered in the Self, or the Consciousness within, a sacrifice is performed, and it is a Yoga. When the vital energy inside moving in the form of the breathing process is regulated, through systematised exhalation, inhalation or retention known usually as Rechaka, Puraka and Kumbhaka, a sacrifice is performed. And that is also a way of Yoga. Any act by which the propulsion of the mind and the senses outwardly is checked for the purpose of the utilisation of the whole of one's consciousness for contemplation on a 'being' which includes one's own self and is therefore larger than one's self is a great sacrifice. Whenever our joy is shared with another, we perform a sacrifice. And the great joy of everyone is to retain the ego. The maintenance intact of one's own ego-sense is the greatest of satisfactions, and when we share this satisfaction a little of the ego is diminished in its intensity, thereby we part with a measure of our personality, we share a little bit of our being, the lower self, by which act we expand our consciousness in the direction of that which includes the

so-called lower self of ours as well as that on which we are contemplating. When we were discussing about the concept of the diety we had touched upon this theme. All these are *Yajñas*, or sacrifices, or a *Tapas*, and therefore they are Yoga. Study of scriptures with concentration and a holiness of spirit is also regarded as a sacrifice, because concentration is involved there. But we are admonished that sacrifices which require physical material are lower than those forms of sacrifice where the mind alone functions and any physical appurtenance is not necessary. A feeling of charitableness, for instance, is a mere act of the mind, which is superior to the physical expression of it by way of parting with any external material when the inward feeling is absent. It is the feeling that counts, and it assumes a significance only when it is genuine, when it becomes a tendency to rise above one's lower self to the higher Self which includes the person or persons towards which one expresses the charitable feelings. Any kind of austerity by which the senses are restrained and the ego is overcome in any percentage is superior to material sacrifices. And the highest sacrifice, or the loftiest concentration, greatest form of Yoga is the centering of consciousness in the Consciousness of a larger dimension. "Dispelling all doubts by the awakening of knowledge, and converting or transforming every action into Yoga, root yourself in your higher Consciousness", are the concluding words of the Fourth Chapter, which message is continued in the Fifth and Sixth Chapters in certain other forms of detail.

Knowledge and action are not two different things. Sāmkhya and Yoga are like the obverse and reverse of the same coin. Therefore, renunciation of any kind is impossible unless the separatist tendency in one's self is overcome to the extent necessary. We always feel that we are separate from the world outside and from creation as a whole. This tendency of the isolation of oneself from everything outside is the opposite of Yoga, and if Yoga is a gradual movement towards the affiliation of one's self with all things outside, aiming at union with things finally, if Yoga means that, renunciation of any kind is impossible without this Yoga; because renunciation, at least in the spirit of the Bhagavadgītā does not mean a physical dissociation from objects or persons but a withdrawal of the consciousness of the externality of things, so that renunciation becomes a function of consciousness and not an activity of the body. Hence renunciation which is the essence of Karma-Yoga cannot be dissociated from the forms of concentration and meditation which are normally known as Yoga. Meditation and action are the same if they are to be defined in the way we have stated. When the senses move among objects, a desire is not moving, that is the caution we have to exercise when we perform actions in the world. Mostly, when we cognise or perceive things, this process is charged with a desire, a motive within. When we gaze at things or look at objects or hear things or perform any sense-function, we would realise, if we are properly investigative, that there is some kind

of impulsion from inside in the direction of a self-satisfaction in the lower self, and a desireless perception is unthinkable for us. However, Yoga is not the repression of sense-activity but the freeing of sense-activity from involvement in desires which usually propel the activity. All activities get infected with some desire concerned with the ego-sense. And Yoga is a gradual freedom that is to be attained in this activity of the sense-organs by means of the dissociation of the same from this disease called desire. Activity is permissible, and the Bhagavad-gītā tells us that it is unavoidable, but is also insists at the same time that we have to be careful to see that desire is not going there side by side or parallelly with the activity of the senses. It is not necessary that activity should always be with some desire. In fact, the most noble form of action is desireless action. And a desireful action is really culpable, ultimately. When one realises that the impulsion so-called of the senses in the direction of objects is a cosmic function, a thing that was explained in detail in the Third Chapter, one begins to be inwardly happy in a higher sense on account of the attunement of oneself with the great forces of the universe which are the real agents of actions and whose movement is the reason behind the movement of the senses towards the objects. As we have already noted, it is not the senses that move towards the objects; the *Gunas* of *Prakriti* move among the *Gunas* of *Prakriti*. *Prakriti* is moving towards *Prakriti*. The forces of Nature commingle with the forces of Nature, so that there are no sense-organs

and there are no objects of the senses. All this is an illusion of the mind. There is a continuity of movement, which has neither a beginning nor an end, in the entire cyclic motion of cosmic activity, and we do not come into the picture there as individuals. We do not, rather, exist. What exists is the universal force. Prakriti-Shakti manifests itself as *Sattva, Rajas* and *Tamas*. You will not feel at that time that you are doing anything at all, just as when a vehicle is moving, in which you are seated, you do not feel that you have made any contribution to this movement. You are taken by the force of the movement of the vehicle. This is a hard thing for the mind to entertain, because no human being is accustomed to think in this manner. We have a stereotyped way of thinking which is the traditional outlook of life, which is essentially selfish, personal and materialistic, physical and rooted in the utter isolatedness of sense from the whole of the environment. The very quintessence of Yoga practice is stated in two verses towards the end of the Fifth Chapter, which is detailed out in an expanded form in the Sixth Chapter.

The contact of the senses with objects outside has to be severed. This is the first instruction. Here we are likely to make a mistake in understanding the meaning of this statement. The objects have to be severed from their contact with the senses. Generally what we understand by this suggestion is that we should run away physically from the objects. Geographically there has to be

a movement from place to place, from where the objects are located. We move to go to other places where these objects are not available. This is the crudest and the lowest form of renunciation. But we have been cautioned in one place, in the Second Chapter, that physical isolation need not necessarily mean absence of desire for things. The mind may not be dissociated from its contemplated objects, while physically there may be a distance between the body and the objects. The severing of the senses from the objects of their perception means here, in this context, not merely a physical distance to be maintained between ourselves and the objects, but the extrication of our consciousness from the clutches of externality or objectivity and coming to a realisation or experience that the objects are not really externally placed. To come back to the theme of the Third Chapter, again, we have to be convinced at the bottom of our being that the objects are not placed externally in space and time. This is a mistaken view of the mind. If they are not really external to us, there cannot be any sensory contact with them, and, therefore, there is no question of a desire for them. The whole thing drops at one stroke. This is true renunciation, and this is abiding, and this is the significance of this admonition that there should be a severance of the senses from the objects of the senses, and the gaze or the attention fixed in the centre where the mind is located. This is a little bit of psychic instruction. Esoteric psychology holds that the mind has a certain location. In the waking state it is supposed to be

functioning through the brain, and its root is supposed to be the point between the two eyebrows. In the condition of dream, the mind is said to be moving through the nerve-centre located in the throat, or the region of the neck, and in the condition of deep sleep the mind goes down into the heart, and that is the ultimate seat of the mind. And here in the verses referred to in the Fifth Chapter, we are told that the mind has to be concentrated on the point between the two eyebrows. The gaze has to be fixed on the *Ājña-chakra*, as it is called, by which what is implied is that the mind has to concentrate itself on its own seat. Thereby it becomes easier to control the mind than when it is moving away from its centre. Neither should you close the eyes completely nor should you open the eyes fully, which appears to be something like looking at the tip of the nose. The idea is not that you should actually concentrate on the tip of the nose, though that is one form of concentration people generally try sometimes. What is implied is that there should be a half-closed posture of the eyes, by which you neither close them wholly and get induced into a mood of sleep or torpidity, nor do you open them completely and be distracted by the presence of objects outside. Together with this function you begin to breathe slowly, leisurely, with a sense of freedom from engagements and obligations and duties of every kind at that time. The *Prāṇa* moves calmly, harmoniously, beautifully, only when you have no commitments psychologically. If you have any kind of engagement attracting

your attention inwardly, towards that direction the Prāṇa also will move. And the agitation of the Prāṇa is due to distractedness caused by the desires of the mind, by commitment to activity. Hence, when you sit for meditation, there should be no preconceived background of obligations of any kind. Otherwise, a part of your mind, subconsciously or unconscioully, will be tying itself to the engagements towards which also it has to move, and which it has on its hands. When you sit for meditation, there should be no background of obligations of any kind, except the obligation to concentrate. So it would be advisable for every person who is after the practice of meditation to see that immediate obligations are fulfilled before sitting for meditation. Well, you cannot be free from all obligations, of course ; that is very clear. It does not mean that the entire commitments of the whole of life should be stopped. It is not possible. But there should not be any pressing need compelling your attention elsewhere immediately. At least for a few hours you are to be free, may be for half a day you have no engagements, and then you feel a little bit of rest, there is a leisure felt inwardly, then the Prāṇas automatically settle down of their own accord, for there is composure of mind. There is also, then, a spontaneous harmony of the movement of the Prāṇas. The whole attention should be on freedom of the self in the absorption of conscionsness in God. The senses, the mind and the intellect should stand together as if there is a single flame of life emerging from the self within. Usually the senses work

somewhere, the mind is thinking something and the intellect is acquiescing in the activities of the mind and sense ;—they never work in harmony. We are agitated personalities on account of the lack of harmony among the senses, the mind and the intellect. Like three flames of light joining into a single flame, the power of the senses and the power of the mind and the power of reason should stand together in unison. And the comparison given in the Sixth Chapter is that the flame should be unflickering like the glow of the lamp which is placed in a windless place. Such is the consciousness you attain to when there is no desire behind the working of the senses and there is no personal impulsion goading the mind towards anything outside, and the reason is satisfied. One's only goal is Moksha, salvation, and there is no other aim in life. We have to be a hundred-percent convinced that Moksha is the goal of life, the liberation of the spirit is the aim of all our activities, all our studies, all our engagements, anything that we do, in any manner. Non-hatred, non-anger, non-greed follow automatically from this whole-souled attention of the consciousness on the ideal of the salvation of the spirit in the Absolute. This is Yoga in essence, says the Fifth Chapter.

All this is very inspiring no doubt, but when we actually take to the practice, we will find that the senses are not yielding so easily. They are like turbulent horses which drag the vehicle, or the chariot, in any way they like, and to maintain a

control over these horses which drag the vehicle of this body, the personality, is a hard job, indeed. The whole process of the practice of Yoga is a gradual one, not a sudden impulsive movement. We do not jump into action when we enter into Yoga. We take one step at a time, even as the mason keeps only one brick at a time when he raises a wall for a building ; he does not place a thousand bricks in a heap. There is a gradual raising of the building by the architect or the workman, there is a steadiness and fixity maintained right from the bottom or the foundation, and a lot of time is to be taken in seeing that the foundation is strong, that every brick is laid properly in position, and firmly, with the requisite cement. Otherwise, there is a chance of the crumbling of the edifice. There should be no break or haste in any successful action, whether it is in raising a building structure, printing a book, writing a text, listening to a lecture or contemplating on God. Everything has to be done with great caution, passivity, leisure, and composure inwardly, and we will not be losers if we take time in this, because it is wiser to take time to understand each step, than to rush up and lose everything that was gained. Therefore, in this connection, the Sixth Chapter, which is known as 'The Yoga of Meditation', tells us that nobody can be a Yogi who has not renounced the personal will or the mood of taking initiative for the satisfaction or the well-being of one's own lower self. When the senses have no desire for any objects and they have no impulsion whatsoever towards any personalistic action, and

one has inwardly renounced all motives of every kind, then it is that one is established in Yoga.

Yoga is a step that we take in the direction of establishment in impersonality, whatever be the degree of it. And every personalistic will or desire or action is a rootedness in personality. Impersonality is Yoga, which is attained by the stages mentioned in the Yoga scriptures. It is, again, mentioned that Yoga is the concentration which the lower self practises on the immediately superior, higher Self. There are various degrees of self and so we may say that the whole universe consists of only Self, and nothing but that. There are no objects ; there are only selfs, by which what is intended is that unless an element of selfhood is present even in the so-called objects of sense, there cannot be love for the objects. Love is only the recognition of the presence of the self in that which we love ; if the self is not there, love is unthinkable. All love is self-love in various connotations of the meaning of self. It is not without meaning that the metaphysicians of the Upanishads tell us that the whole universe is the Self, the *Ātman* is all things. But one has to be careful, again, in understanding what the Upanishads mean, or the Bhagavadgītā intends, or anyone connotes. When they say that the Self and the universe are identical, it is easy to misunderstand the statement and it is hard to make out the significance thereof. The self is that which we regard as our own psycho-physical individuality, the Mr. or Mrs., the "I" that we regard ourselves

to be ; this is the self for our practical purposes today. But if we analyse the motives behind the moods and activities of the so-called self of ours, we will realise that its intentions are selfish. Again, 'selfish' in a particular interpretation of the meaning of the self. The urge of the senses towards the objects is the action of the self. It is the self that is propelling the senses towards the objects through the instrumentality of the reason and the mind, to come in union with the objects, under the impression that union with objects is the satisfaction of the self. So it is the satisfaction of the self that is the intention behind the so-called coming in contact with the objects of the senses and it is not the love for the objects that is the prime motivation. There is no love for objects, absolutely. There is love only for the satisfaction of one's self, which is impossible, we feel, in a sort of illusion, unless we come in contact with the objects. Various reasons are given as to why this situation supervenes, or takes place. How is it that we make this mistake ? There is a psychological explanation and a metaphysical one. Psychologically, the satisfaction that we feel at the time of coming in contact with the desireful object, or the desired object, is the result of the extinction of desire, the result not of the possession of the object or the enjoyment of the object but of the cessation of desire at the time of coming in contact with the object, which happens on account of the feeling in the mind that its purpose has been served. The purpose of the senses is to possess the object, make it their own,

unite it with themselves and feel a non-separation of themselves from it, which purpose seems to be achieved when the object is possessed, made one's own and there is no further need for the senses and the mind to contemplate the object. 'It has already become mine' and 'it is I', in one sense. The senses have subsided into the mind, the mind has gone back to the reason and the reason is in the self. There is, then, a self-possessedness. Consciousness has rested itself temporarily though only for the flash of a second, and we feel an exhilaration inside, a happiness and satisfaction that we have possessed and enjoyed and got what we want. This is a blunder on the very surface of it.

Metaphysically, the reason is something different. The Self is present everywhere, there is only One Self, the Universal Being, which exists in the objects. The objects pull us, we are pulled towards the objects, and conversely, we too pull the objects towards ourselves, on account of the Self beckoning its own Self in the form of a presence outwardly in space and time. The Infinite is summoning the Infinite in every act of desire, in every process of sense-perception and what we ask for even in the least of our actions and desires is the universal Self, and nothing short of it. But the senses do not know the purpose behind their activity, they are again in ignorance. When we ask for anything, we are asking for this Universal Being, and we are not asking for anything else. This is the ontological explanation, the metaphysical interpretation or reason given behind the movement

of the senses, mind and reason towards objects. It is the higher Self which is the object of the lower self in every form of contemplation. And when the self which is lower tunes itself up to the higher Self, it is in a state of Yoga. This higher Self has various degrees of manifestation, and the higher Self need not necessarily mean the Absolute at once. There is, to come back to the theme of *Yajña* mentioned in the Third Chapter, a deity that superintends over the circumstance of the relation between the subject and the object. This deity is the higher Self for the time being, the synthesis between the subject and the object. This deity, again, becomes an individual subject in the light of a higher realm of cognition which has its own objects. Difficult is all this for the mind to understand and we are not supposed to go too high when we are in a lower stage. We will know what is above us when we reach the stage that is immediately below. Each time we are given only the vision of one step ahead ; we cannot have the total vision of all things at the stroke of a moment. Just now we can have an inkling of what is immediately above us, and further on we cannot know anything. When we reach that second step, or achieve the immediately higher level, we will have the vision of the next higher level. Nature reveals its secrets by degrees, and the whole secret cannot be given at one moment.

The Bhagavadgītā, in its Sixth Chapter, tells us that the higher Self is the controlling principle of the lower self. The higher Self is the object of medi-

tation by the lower self, and the higher is the aim of the lower. To the extent the lower is in union with the higher, to that extent we are successful in our endeavours. To the extent we are selfish and ignorant of even the presence of the higher, to that extent we are not going to be successful here. The higher Self becomes the friend of the lower when the lower is tuned up to the higher, and then it helps the lower. But the higher Self may appear even to be an enemy. Sometimes it appears to us that God Himself is setting aside all our motives and is not compassionate enough, all because we are not in tune with His purposes, His motives, and His Laws. So the Self is the friend of the self, and is the enemy also, which means to say that the higher Self is the friend and the benefactor of ourselves to the extent we are in tune with its purposes and laws and regulations, and to the extent we are dissonant in respect of its laws, we are a failure in life. With this caution, a friendly admonition, the Yoga of Meditation in the Sixth Chapter continues. This is a very important section which stresses upon the need for self-control in a scientific manner. The Yoga, here described, is to an extent similar to the one propounded in the Sūtras of Patañjali.

There should be a time for you to sit for meditation and the time should be such, as it was already pointed out, that you have no engagements otherwise, and you are free from all compulsive attention at that moment. You can take a deep sigh of relief, "I have done my duty today, now I am free".

It is only then that you can sit for meditation, not when you feel after half an hour, "I have a tremendous work, I have to run up to that place to do something". Then meditation will not be possible, because, unconsciously, you are dragged in another direction quite different from the one on which you are supposed to be meditating. So, the time and the place are important in the sense that they should not cause any kind of distraction to the mind. The posture you maintain in the body also should be such that there should not be any kind of ache or pain felt in the system. Suppose you are seated in *Padmāsana*, or *Sukhāsana*, or any such *Āsana* for the purpose of meditation, you should not feel pain in the knee, or the back, etc. Then that posture would not be suitable. You are a master of your own self and you can choose your own posture. Patanjali is generous when he says that the posture to be maintained for the purpose of meditation is any one, provided it is comfortable. He does not speak of Padmāsana, Siddhāsana, and all that. Any comfortable posture, —comfortable in the sense that it does not distract your attention and does not compel you to pin your attention on the body, —is advised. The purpose of the maintenance of the posture in meditation is to gain freedom over the consciousness of the body and not to think of the body thereby. Suppose you feel pain somewhere, you will be thinking of the body, "here it is aching". Hence, you choose your own posture, whatever it be. Here is entire freedom given to you. But the posture should be such that you are able to maintain a spontaneity of

consciousness and do not allow the mind either to go into sleep or be aware of the pains of the body. Neither should you get distracted by the presence of the body or any kind of object of sense, nor should you tend towards sleep or moodiness due to an inappropriate posture that you have assumed. For instance, if you lie down on bed, you are likely to go to sleep. So, lying down is not a suitable posture. Any kind of aching posture is also not suitable; standing also is not a suitable posture, because you may fall down when you are concentrating. You have to choose a convenient position of the body. That is called Āsana in meditation.

And place and time have been mentioned. You have, then, to select the object of your meditation. All that has been told upto this time through the various Chapters is enough to indicate what that object should be. There is no need to expatiate on the theme further. You persuade your consciousness to concentrate itself on the great objective of Yoga as described in the earlier chapters. If you cannot do this for any reason, you choose any other object which is to your satisfaction. The satisfaction here suggested is the absence of the necessity to think of anything else at that time; —that is the meaning of satisfaction here in regard to concentration on an object. The object of meditation should be chosen in such a manner that there should be no need felt at that time to think of anything else. You should not be hungry, for example. Else, you will be thinking of a little breakfast or of going to a restaurant, etc., when you sit for meditation. Why should you

sit for meditation when your stomach is pinching? Do not have any kind of agony? If you are thirsty, drink water and sit peacefully; if you are hungry, eat, to some extent; and if you are tired, go to bed for half an hour, and have some sleep, —that does not matter. Why should you tire yourself? Yoga is not a painful discipline that you inflict upon yourself. It is not a torture that we are undergoing; it is not a medical treatment. It is a happy process spontaneously undertaken, joyfully, by the whole self, of its own accord, without any kind of external compulsion. We have to understand this. Yoga is a spontaneity of the movement of the lower self to the higher Self.



XI

THE YOGA OF MEDITATION

The Yoga of Meditation is the subject of the Sixth Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā;—*Dhyāna-Yoga*, as it is called. We have noticed that, for purposes of Meditation, a convenient place, free from distractions, is necessary. The time that we choose for Meditation, also, is to be such that it should not have the background of any engagement or activity which may distract the attention of the mind from the goal of Meditation. A suitable place, a suitable time,—these two are very important prerequisites. But more important, perhaps, than place and time is the preparedness of the mind. The mind should be eager to sit for Meditation and it should not feel any kind of compulsion. We do not sit for Meditation merely because in our daily routine it is the time alloted for Meditation; that would be something like going for lunch at noon, even if we are not hungry, merely because noon is prescribed as the time for lunch. It is not the time, but the need that is important. If the mind does not feel the need for Meditation, a mere prescription of place and time will not be of much benefit. Most people feel a difficulty in getting any kind of satisfactory result, because the mind is not prepared.

How is the mind to be prepared? Here a question arises, which can be answered by each one, independently, from one's own point of view. Why do we feel the need for taking to Yoga practice? If the need has not been felt, we would not have been resorting to Yoga at all. Somehow, we have felt within our hearts that Yoga is a solution to the problems of life. Everyone has difficulties and tensions and our conscience has somehow persuaded us to accept that the panacea for all problems in life is Yoga, finally. We have accepted, of our own accord, that no one can help us in the end, except that great principle which Yoga regards as the ultimate reality of life. We do not take to the Yoga of Meditation just because somebody has told us to do it, or some text book has eulogised it, just as we do not go to the dining hall for our lunch, or dinner, merely because somebody asked us to go there. We feel that it is necessary, and therefore we go. Now, this need that we feel for the practice of Yoga should be a genuine one. The mind is a trickster. It always deceives us from moment to moment, because it does not have a continuity of moods. The moods of the mind change almost everyday. And it is not difficult for the mind to get dissatisfied with things. And it can be dissatisfied even with that which it once regarded as a very necessary item in its life. There is no more difficult thing to understand than our own mind. We ourselves are the greatest difficulties in life. Our mind, like a weathercock, moves from one state to another. So, while most of us may be honest and sincere in our

resort to Yoga practice, we are also in some way subject to the whims of the mind. "I do not feel like it", this is what we often remark. But why should we not feel like it? What has happened? And we would only say, "I do not know what has happened". That means to say that our mind is not under our control. Even our taking to the practice of Yoga may be a mood of the mind and not be a real conviction born of understanding;—this is important to remember. Even as there are umpteen moods of the mind, Yoga also may be one of the moods, and it may be a very unreliable mood, for it may pass away. And the problems we feel when we sit for Meditation are due to the unpreparedness of the mind basically, at its root, though on the surface it appears as if it has accepted the adventure. Many times we accept things only on the surface, and in our basic attitude we are not prepared to accept everything. Now, the acceptance of Yoga should be a whole-souled attitude of the seeker. It should not be merely a surface outlook which has somehow acquiesced in the situation. And, as the great goal of life is the wholeness of reality, our preparedness for its realisation should also be a wholeness from our side. Hence, a moody attitude and an acceptance which is partial cannot be satisfactory where our objective is such an important factor in life as Yoga. All this has been touched upon in a concise manner in different places of the Chapters of the Bhagavadgītā, which will give us a clue as to why we have varying moods and contradictory desires, which will

surprise even our own selves. The answer to this question in the Sixth Chapter is that we are often likely to be extremists in our activities. We are not sober and harmonised in our engagements, in our activities, in our relationships. When we like a thing, we sell ourselves, as it were, to that which we love. It is an extreme attitude of attachment; when we dislike a thing we whole-heartedly condemn the thing and go to the other extreme. We have found that it is very hard to maintain a balanced mood of equanimity of attitude. And it is easy to be an extremist, while it is hard to be a person of sobriety of perspective. Either we eat too much, or we do not eat at all. Both these things are very easy. We suddenly declare, "I shall not eat; for one week I shall observe fast". But to control the appetite in a way that does not affect either the body or the mind, or even our relationships and activities, is a little difficult. So while the Gītā has emphasised the factor of harmony in Yoga, it has not confined this harmony merely to the ultimate union of the Self with the Absolute, in a transcendent sense. Again and again it has been driven into our minds, in various places, that Yoga as harmony has to be applied in its relevance at every level of life, even in our kitchen and bathroom, our social relationships and our personal vocations, and the like. Even in our eating and sleeping and our recreation there should be a harmony, and there should not be any extreme mood, not that we indulge in eating and sleeping too much, not also that we completely abstain ourselves from

the needs of the body and mind. The golden mean is supposed to be the essence of the ethical attitude; —*the golden mean;*—and it is so subtle as a hair's breadth; it is an imperceptible reality. The arrangement of factors in a harmonious manner is an imperceptible truth, not visible to the organs of the senses. But we have to conceive it in our minds, with some effort. Yoga is not for that person who eats too much, or does not eat at all; sleeps too much, or does not sleep at all; works too much, or does not work at all; plays too much, or does not play at all, etc. These are common statements but very important ones.

The great Masters of Yoga are most normal persons. They are not queer individuals looking like other-worldly ascetics, making themselves conspicuous. There is no conspicuity about Yoga practice. It is not an unnatural way of living making oneself an exhibit in the social atmosphere. When you are a real Yogi you will not appear as a Yogi at all. The moment you start appearing as a Yogi, there is to be sensed some unnaturalness in the practice. Why should you "appear"? There is no need to put on countenances. Normalcy of behaviour is a spontaneous consequence that follows from an understanding of the wholeness of life, which is, basically, Yoga. With this preparedness of the mind in a healthy manner towards all things, one has to sit for Meditation on the degrees of Reality; the particular degree that has to be chosen is the *Iṣhta-Devatā*. We have already referred to

the deity, or Devatā, on an earlier occasion. And your soul-filled absorption in it with affection, with love, and with utmost regard, is your Yoga in respect of it. The mind is steady absolutely, when it is in the presence of that which it likes immensely. When you have something as your possession, you get wholly absorbed, and you are in a state of rapture, as it were, by the very presence of it, because it is the diety that you like, and the only thing that you want. Then it is impossible for the mind to think anything else at that time. Now, is there anything in the world which you like so much that you cannot think anything else at the moment of being in its presence? Here is the significance of what is called initiation into the technique of Meditation,—the choosing of the objective, or the ideal of Meditation, is very important. It is done with the guidance of a preceptor, a teacher, a superior, a *Guru*. Most of us are incapable of choosing our ideal, we drift from one point to another, today one thing looking all right and tomorrow another thing. A superior mind which has passed through certain stages of psychological development would be a good guide to people who are in the initial stages, such a person is a *Guru*, or a teacher. Because, if one has already passed through some stages which another has not come across, the former can tell the latter what are the things which have to be expected on the path. Hence initiation into Yoga is the introduction of the mind to that particular ideal or concept of the objective which can engage the attention wholly, so

that it becomes the only reality for the practitioner. The mind can concentrate itself entirely only on that from which it can expect everything that it needs. It you are sure that a thing is going to satisfy everyone of your needs, and there is nothing else left out, then there would be no need for you to think anything else. But there is a suspicion in the mind, a doubt that, perhaps, it is not the only thing that is needed in life, that there are other things also which are equally important, or, at least necessary in some way. This would be another way of saying that one has not chosen the ideal properly; has no faith in the glorious object which has been chosen as the target of Meditation.

The *Iṣhta*, or the object of Meditation, is God-incarnate in that particular form and if one has no trust in God himself, what else can one be expected to believe in? There is a basic error in the very choice of the object, on account of which the mind distracts itself from the point chosen and flits from that thing to another thing, searching for that which it needs, or requires. Really, it does not know what it wants. The psychology of Meditation is to be mastered before one actually sits for Meditation. The Supreme Being is present in every object. God is everywhere. And it will be quite in the fitness of things for a person to choose any particular form, or concept, for the purpose of Meditation, because God is present even there. But what is important is not the presence of God in a theoretical sense; rather it is the recognition of it and the acceptance

of it from one's heart, for which a little bit of understanding is necessary. The all-pervading nature of God excludes nothing from its purview and inclusiveness, and that which we regard as the best thing in our life may be regarded as our object of Meditation. Anything and everything can be a suitable object, provided we believe in its capacity. The purpose of Meditation is to break through the fort of the mind which has guarded itself very securely in the prison-house of this body. It is tremendously attached to the particular things in the world. And the existence of the mind as an isolated unit of thought consists in its desires for the varieties of phenomena. And to make the mind cease to exist as an isolated unit would be to cease from thinking of the particular, isolated objects. The concentration of the mind on any particular thing, or object, continuously, without thought of anything else, will break the mind to pieces; the bubble will burst. A continuous hammering of a single idea upon the mind will see that the mind transcends itself, and one wakes up as if from a dream into a new perceptive and awareness. The rising of the mind from phenomena to Reality is something like the rise of our mind from dream to waking. There is a difference in that which you experience, as there is a difference between dream experience and waking experience. We have to be sure that pure Meditation is the state when the mind does not think of two objects, or does not entertain two ideas. When the mind is moving from idea to idea and is flowing with a series or

current of thoughts, we may be sure that our Meditation is not complete and the object chosen has not been properly considered. The only solution here is to go to the teacher, the *Guru.* There is some mistake. You have some unfulfilled desires. It does not mean that there are people in the world with no desires at all. Everyone has some desire; yes. But it is the duty of the seeker on the spiritual path to sublimate his desires in a positive way. And how one is to sublimate impulses is to be known only from the teacher, because people do not have uniform desires; each one has a particular type of desire and that particular desire has to be tackled in a manner that is befitting the condition in which it has arisen. Hence there is no such thing as a wholesale initiation of the masses. We cannot shout in the streets and initiate people in thousands. Each individual case is like a patient treated by a physician. We cannot have a mass treatment of diseases by uniform injections or capsules. Each disciple, each student, is a unique item by himself, or herself, and the *Guru* has to pay particular attention to the condition of the mind or the state of the disciple concerned, from the point of view of the state in which that person is. Hence, when a serious problem arises, you cannot solve it yourself, at least when it is apparently beyond your understanding. We cannot know the mystery of our own desires, and the obstacles in Meditation are only desires which have not been fulfilled.

Now, the fulfilment of desires need not mean

indulgence in satisfactions, though some of the desires have to be satisfied in a manner when it is necessary to adopt that method. But, otherwise, they are to be absorbed and melted away by other techniques which are followed in Yoga. All this is a subject one cannot read in books. They are secrets and esoteric approaches, and connected with the idiosyncrasy of the particular individual concerned. Thus, the preparation for Yoga is, perhaps, going to take more time than the actual concentration of the mind on the chosen object. It is no use suddenly saying, "I will go for Meditation". The point is not that. What is important is : are you ready for it ? Is it possible for the mind to accept it completely, or are you suppressing certain needs and demands of the mind brushing them aside in the subconscious, giving them a 'no', when they ask ? If that is the case, you have to be thrice cautious in your approach. But when you succeed in understanding yourself and the nature of your desires, fulfilled or otherwise, the mind will stand unflickering like a flame placed in an atmosphere where there is no breeze of any kind. There is no flickering. And such an attutide, such a mood is hard in most of us. The Bhagavadgītā here tells us that we shall feel such a joy, such a satisfaction, such a delight when the mind is wholly absorbed in this manner, that even the worst sorrow of our life will not be able to shake our minds. There is no sorrow at all for us at that time. Everything will look beautiful and we will be able to adjust ourselves with every blessed thing in life. We, at that time, become

friends of all, and all become our friends. We get severed from the sources of all pain and we stand independent in a unique sense, in a superb expandedness of being, where the cause of sorrow which is the ego is overcome to the maximum extent.

But it is doubtful if everyone will be able to achieve the goal of life in one life, because of the various difficulties and weaknesses which are part and parcel of bodily existences here. Can anyone be sure that the goal of Yoga, the purpose of life, can be realised in one existence, physically ? A doubt occurs to the mind : 'is it possible, or, perhaps, it is not for me' ? Arjuna put the question to the great Teacher. Take for granted that there is a sincere student, honestly practising Yoga throughout his life, yet does not realise the goal of Yoga and his life is cut off by death, having not achieved the supreme purpose. What happens to that person ? Imagine, you have endeavoured your best in the practice of Meditation, in taking to Yoga. Yes, wonderful. With all your efforts you have not succeeded, and you have been forced by the *Karmas* that determine your life to leave this body. What happens, then ? What is going to be the fate of that person in the future existence, is the question of Arjuna. The answer is very satisfying and solacing. Krishna says, "Whoever does good in this world, even in the least measure, cannot go to ruin". That is the beautiful side of *Karma*, or the law of action and reaction. While we are always afraid of the word *Karma*, as if it is a binding chain, we are likely to forget the

positive side of its being capable of giving credit also, when we follow it according to the system of its operation. Our efforts towards the practice of Yoga are praiseworthy attempts that we have undertaken in life ;—whether or not we succeed is a different matter. As a matter of fact, the Yoga of the Bhagavadgītā is not concerned with success or failure ; it is rooted in the attitude that we adopt throughout our life, the sincerity with which we have taken to it and the honesty of purpose that was backing us up. For God values our honesty and sincerity and not the ulterior success that one may expect but should not expect. The whole of the conditions is in us and not outside.

A person who leaves the body before the achievement of the goal of Yoga will be reborn ; —but under favourable circumstances. He will be born under those conditions where the earlier practices can be accelerated. He will be born again in a condition where he will be finding conducive circumstances around him, not obstructing his practice. The memory of the past will work its own way. This memory may not always be a conscious operation of the mind. Many of us cannot have a memory of our previous lives, but everyone of us feels an urge towards a particular end, though this urge is not intelligible on the conscious level of the mind. This deeper longing that we feel within ourselves is the propulsion of our previous practices and aspirations. The mind is not merely the conscious manifestaion of it ; it is

deeper still in the subconscious, and further deeper in the unconscious, and so on. So a person reborn in this manner is impelled to move in the direction of the very same practice which was not completed in the earlier life, and everything that is necessary for the practice will be provided to him by the very law of things. And no pain will be felt on account of the blessedness that accrues from the merits of the earlier life.

You have been very sincere and honest in your efforts in the direction of Yoga, and it shall take care of you, it cannot desert you. And Yoga is a more loving mother than all the mothers that you can think of in the world. Or, the great Teacher, Krishna, tells us that one may be born as a child of a Yogi himself, and what can be a greater blessedness than that to a seeking soul ? There is no fear of destruction or loss of effort. The Fifth Chapter concludes by saying that God is the Friend and Protector of all. You shall achieve peace of mind only when you realise that God is your Friend, and the only Friend, and the most real of all friends. When you turn to Him for succour, how could He desert you, leave you, and forget you ? You can forget Him, but he cannot forget you, because the Real is more powerful than the apparent, or the unreal. Our distractions are movements of the mind towards shadows and not realities. But when there is a sincere movement towards Reality, though without a proper conception of it, it shall work in its own way in a miraculous manner. The

ways of God are mysterious in themselves and, therefore, the sincerity, in whatever measure, that you exercise towards God, whatever your concept of God, whole-heartedly like a child, that shall be your saviour in your future life. Not merely that, here in this life itself, you shall be taken care of. Krishna says that neither here nor hereafter will there be any trouble for that person. The difficulties are only in the beginning when one feels as if one is in hell itself. But, later on, one will see the rays of the supernal light flashing upon one's face. Everything is difficult and hard and unpleasant in the beginning. The Gītā will tell us sometime afterwards that things which are good ultimately look very unpleasant in the beginning, and they yield the fruit of the greatest satisfaction and delight later on. The pains of life, the sufferings through Yoga are inevitable in the face of every kind of spiritual practice. When you practise Meditation, you are clearing the debris of your personality. It is as if you are sweeping your room which has not been dusted for years, clearing the cobwebs, etc. And when you clear the room of the dirt, there you will find the dust rising up and blinding your eyes and it looks as if things have become worse than what they were earlier. But afterwards the dust goes, it has been cleared completely, and you are happy. So these problems and difficulties, pains and sorrows and doubts, the agonies that appear in the course of the practice of Yoga are the inevitable consequences of your effort in cleansing the mind of all the dirt that is deposited there since years and

incarnations. But a glorious day is to come, we shall become happy, expecting a blessedness that is supremely divine. One who believes in God and trusts in God wholly, taking refuge in God, shall be taken care of by God. "He shall not lose Me, and I shall not lose him", says the great Master. One who has taken shelter in God cannot be deserted by God under any circumstance, and peace, protection and satisfaction of every kind shall be the fruits of sincerity and honesty. What you are called upon to be sure of is that you are honest at the core and there is no duplicity of attitude even in the least. You are not gambling with God, and you are not testing Him, and you are not expecting anything from Him with a personal motive. Let these things be clear to you, and you shall receive the flood of His Grace descending upon you instantaneously, because God is Spaceless and Timeless.

"He sees the Self abiding in all beings and all beings in the Self, whose self has been made steadfast by Yoga, who everywhere sees the same". "He who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, to him I cease not, nor to Me does he cease". "Whoso, rooted in oneness, worships Me who abide in all beings, that Yogi dwells in Me, whatever be his mode of life". "Whoso, by comparison with his own self, sees the same everywhere (as his own self), O Arjuna, be it pleasure or pain, he is deemed the highest Yogi".

XII

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

By the time we reach the Seventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, we are touching a new realm of being and the whole perspective that was presented before us in the course of the earlier six chapters suddenly changes, as if a curtain has been lifted in the dramatic portrayal of the Gospel. There is an introduction of the soul of the seeker to the empyrean of the Creator, a subject which has not been adequately touched upon during the earlier course of the studies. There has been a particular emphasis laid in the first six chapters upon the individual, the duty of the person, the integration of the psycho-physical complex. There has been an admonition in the earlier chapters to the individual, or man as such, in his capacity as a soul which aspires for the realisation of higher values, so that this task of self-integration gets completed when we reach the theme of the Sixth Chapter wherein we place ourselves in the context of a total preparation of ourselves to leap into the beyond. The individual is suddenly set in tune with the universal in the Seventh Chapter. Thus, the great Master tells at the commencement of this section that this aspiration is a great blessing. And very few in this world can have the satisfaction of having received this

divine blessing, *viz.*, love of God, and a complete preparation of oneself in the direction of God. It is not that everyone will be fit even to contain the idea of the Absolute in one's mind, let alone have a direct contact with it or an experience of it. Even the entertainment of the notion of the Absolute is a grand achievement. It is a great achievement indeed if anyone of us can satisfactorily contain in our minds the nature or structure of the Supreme Being. That shall be regarded as an attainment in the practice of Yoga. A whole-souled aspiration for God even in its initial stage is superior to all verbal knowledge, intellectual acumen, or scriptural learning. Very few will be inclined to turn to God. Most people are distracted in the direction of the objects of the senses. People are in search of satisfaction which is empirical, physical and egoistic. The bliss of God is not the concern of the ordinary man, it is impossible even for thinking and understanding. Not many have this endowment by which the mind will agree to turn to God in his reality. But even among those who are truly aspiring for the realisation of God, very few will really succeed in the attempt. It does not mean that everyone who files an application will be chosen, because success in this path of the Spirit is hard to attain in the case of the individual who is lodged in the body and limited to the empirical categories of the mind. With this cautious introduction the Teacher of the Bhagavadgītā takes us to a picture of the cosmos which is concisely explained in a few words. The whole universe is constituted of the five Elements;

—earth, water, fire, air and ether,—the Mind, Intellect, Ego. And here the teaching resembles to a large extent the cosmological explanation offered by the Sāmkhya system. We have touched upon this theme earlier on some occasion. The lowest category of reality that we observe is the earth plane, physical matter, solid substance, gross objects, all which can be grouped under the category of the Mahābhūtas, or the five elements. Anything that is perceptible to the senses is regarded as material. The five elements, so-called, are not five different substances as you might have heard it said earlier. These elements are rather five degrees of the density of the cosmic substance. It does not mean that there is a total distinction of one from the other. According to the cosmology of the Sāmkhya, and also the Vedānta, the effect can be resolved into the cause, so that, ultimately, it can be said safely that space is the container or the bosom of all things.

Now, these physical elements,—earth, water, fire, air and ether,—therefore, form the sum and substance of the physical universe. But there are subtler realities which are not accessible to the senses of the individual. The higher we go, the more imperceptible does the object become, because of the rarefaction of its constituents. The Sāmkhya tells us that beyond the five elements, subtler than the five elements, are what are called the Tanmātrās, the subtle essences of the five elements; something like the electrical constitution of gross objects, though this analogy is not complete; for we cannot explain

it in a better manner. The substantiality of the gross objects loses its accepted significance when we view it as an eddy of electrical force, or energy, which is co-extensive with the other parts of the universe, which are also constituted of similar waves of force. Thus, there being only a continuum of energy, we are bordering upon what the Sāmkhya calls *Prakriti*. All these details are not in the verses of the Bhagavadgītā, but the reference made is certainly to these principles. Above the five gross elements, beyond the Tanmātrās or the subtle essences, behind all these, is the Cosmic Thinking Principle. This is something which we cannot conceive and cannot perceive. From the practical point of view, the Cosmic Reality beyond the elements can only be an object of direct realisation and experience, and it can never become a spatio-temporal object. But we can infer the presence of the Cosmic Mind, by logical deduction from facts of present experience. It is certain that the mind conditions the objects in some manner. But it is not proper to say that an individual mind can condition the objects, though it is true that a large contribution is made by the mental structure in the perception of an object, so that it can be said that no object is seen as it is in itself. Yet, at the same time, we cannot be sure that any individual mind is the creator or a total conditioner of the object of perception. There is some sort of a reality in the object, notwithstanding the fact that there is a conditioning of the object by the perceiving subject. The entire conclusion hangs upon our definition of the perceiving subject. What sort of

subject is it that conditions the object? It is not 'my' mind or 'your' mind, and there seems to be a Total Mind which extends far beyond the ken of the individual minds not only in quantity but perhaps even in quality,—a subject which is outside the scope of our present studies. This is referred to in the verses of the Bhagavadgītā when the word "Manah" or the 'Mind' is mentioned in this context. The mind is superior to the physical elements. We would be surprised to hear that the mind is superior to the elements. And a little commonsense will tell us that it cannot be our mind that is mentioned here, because nobody can say that our mind is superior to the whole physical cosmos. Naturally, we have to identify this "Mind" with the Cosmic Mind which is the Mind that is referred in the Sāmkhya cosmology under the designation '*Mahat*'.

There is, again, the, '*Ahamkāra*', the Cosmic Self-Sense. There is the '*Mahat*', the Cosmic Understanding, or Intelligence, above the '*Ahamkāra*', according to the Sāmkhya, and beyond that the indescribable continuum, the '*Avyakta*' as it is called, the 'Prakriti' of the Sāmkhya, beyond all which is the Supreme Resplendence of the Absolute, —call it '*Purusha*' or any other name according to the schools of thought. These are, broadly speaking, the constituents of the entire layers of ihe cosmos. These are the eight forms of *Prakriti*, according to the Bhagavadgītā, though the Sāmkhya classification differs here in the manner of the gradations and specifications of these principles.

Beyond these conceivable forms of Prakriti there is a Higher Element which regulates the operation of these lower elements, which is the Principle of God himself working in a mysterious manner. Though everything is caused by the permutation and combination of these principles mentioned already, they are regulated and operated by the will of a Superior Principle, which, in religious or theological parlance, we call the Power of God; the Shakti of the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer, the Energy of the Absolute. Nothing outside this Being can ever be. Everything is subsumed under this Great Reality, so that the Sāmkhya of the Bhagavadgītā overcomes the difficulties of the dualism of the classical Sāmkhya. The Purusha and the Prakriti of the Sāmkhya are subsidiary to the Supreme Being of the Bhagavadgītā. They are like the Attributes mentioned by Spinoza in his metaphysical theology of the Supreme Substance. They are spiritual categories and not merely qualities in the ordinary empirical sense. This is the All-in-All Being.

The "I-Am-What I-Am" is God in himself and not God as he appears to us. He cannot appear to anybody because he is not an object of anybody's cognition or perception. The Bhagavadgītā is emphatic that God is all-in-all and he is not limited in any manner whatsoever, by anything outside him, because nothing can ever be outside God. The movement of the soul towards God, therefore, becomes an inexplicable process under the circumstances of this superior definition of God. The idea

of movement gets ruled out in the context of the Omnipresence of the Supreme Being, and yet it has to be explained. It does not appear that the movement of the aspiration is in a horizontal manner through space or even in time. It is not a covering of distance as on a road, it is rather an ascent from the lower degrees of concept and being to the higher ones. When we travel from dream to walking, we are not moving on a road by sitting in a vehicle, yet we travel; it is true. The travel is a psychological movement, more properly explicable as an ascent or rising from the lower to the higher rather than a travel or movement in a particular direction in space.

Describing the possible character of the movement of the soul towards God, we are told that there are four types of aspiring souls, all these aspirations being regarded as worthwhile and very valuable in their own way. Our love for God is variegated in its motivation. And the more perfect is the love or aspiration, the greater is the chance of one's realisation of God, experience of the Absolute. The more we try to consider God as an outside object, even though in a philosophical sense, the more is the difficulty that we will encounter on the path, because God resents any kind of a relinquishment of him to the limbo of an objectivity of perception. If God tolerates not anything at all, it is our attitude towards him as if he is an object outside. And if God is the Soul of the Cosmos, the Ātman of all this consciousness behind every experience, it

should be impossible, even with the farthest stretch of our imagination, to conceive him as an object and to regard him as being away from us even by the distance of an inch. If God is not an object, what should be our attitude towards God ? All attitudes are objective and are movements of the psyche. And if God is expected to be a Cosmic Soul, the Self of all beings, it is impossible to speak of any 'attitude' or an ulteriorly motivated aspiration towards him. Yet, people belong to various categories and degrees of evolution and experience. There are people, mostly, who turn to God in times of distress, when they are in great agony or sorrow, and when there seems to be no help coming from anyone, from anywhere in the world, they cry out, "God help me". The asking for God's Presence is because of the pain through which they are passing, and the lacuna that they feel in their selves (*Ārta*). The anguish that is tearing our hearts and the inadequacy that we feel everywhere within as well as without summons God for help. This is one sort of love for God, a devotion, a religion, of course. Everything is religious if it is galvanised by the touch of God-consciousness in some way. But what is the quality, the intensity, of this aspiration, is a matter to think. Bhagvān Srī Krishna, as a Teacher of Yoga, tells us that these are a type of devotees, and are great indeed in their own way, because they turn to God, whatever be their motive. There are others who seek knowledge, wisdom, enlightenment and not any material favour. Not redress from sorrow or grief, not long life, not anything that human beings

will regard as ordinarily acceptable or valuable is their aim. They require illumination, understanding, and a blessing which will take them to an entry into Truth (*Jijñāsu*). There is a third category, in whose connection the term used in the Bhagavadgītā is *Arthārthī*, those who seek 'artha' or an objective. Usually the word *Artha* is translated as 'object' or 'material need'. Most commentators tell us that the third category mentioned is that of the devotee who turns to God for material prosperity of some kind. But there are others who think that it is not proper to imagine the third category as in any way inferior to the second. There is some sort of a logic, it appears in the arrangement of these devotees as *Ārta*, *Jijñāsu*, *Arthārthī* and *Jñānī*, inasmuch as the last one is proclaimed to be the most superior as contrasted with the earlier ones. And the second one is certainly superior to the first one. It is accepted, therefore, by implication, that the third is superior to the first and the second. So, there are those interpreters of the Gītā who say that here 'Artha' should not be taken to mean material or physical property, but the fulfilment of the aims of life which are known as the *Purushārthas*. This is a novel interpretation given by some. The aims of existence are the objects aspired for by these devotees, who are considered here as *Arthārthīs*, seeking those things which are the supreme objects, not the lower ones which are physical.

But the greatest devotee of God is he who asks for nothing from God; not even knowledge,

not even enlightenment, not even freedom from suffering, and such devotees are rare to find, because the mind is made in such a way that it has always a need of some kind or other. And to imagine a condition of the mind where it has no need whatsoever is difficult. The highest devotion asks for God alone, and not anything *through* God, or *from* God. The superiority of this sort of devotion should become obvious to any thinking mind, because to ask for anything from God, or to utilise God as an instrument in the acquisition of anything exterior to God, would be to reduce God to a category inferior to that which one is asking for through the devotion. If God is an instrument in the fulfilment of desires, he ceases to be the Supreme Being, or the Ultimate Reality. That would suggest that the thing we are asking for is better than God himself! And one who knows that God is superior,—the cause is superior to all its effects, and the one who gives is more than what is given, that God is the Absolute All-in-All, is the *Jñānī*. And if our heart can accept this truth, that the Being of God is greater than anything that can emanate from God, then we shall absorb ourselves in a type of devotion which is identical with being itself. Knowledge becomes being. When knowledge is inseparable from being, we are supposed to be in a state of realisation which is the highest type of spiritual experience. "All these are wonderful devotees", the Teacher says, "but I consider the *Jñānī*, or the wisdom-devotee as the supreme, for he has become the very Self of God". One who is

immensely delighted at the very thought of the Omnipresence of God, who is in ecstacies even at the very idea of the Supreme Absoluteness of God's Being, has attained everything in one moment, nay, instantaneously. He is flooded with the very being of God, and not with the objects that one considers as one's accessories in life.

The cosmological approaches to the existence of God as the creator of the universe, these explanations which are offered in the Seventh Chapter, somehow keep God at an awful distance from us, in spite of the proclamation that the supreme concept of God is that of the identity of all beings with the being of God. Curiously, we begin to feel that God is some tremendous, fearsome, cosmic force, and our love for God is simultaneously attended with the fear of God. We are wonder-struck. We feel it is impossible for us even to face the presence of such a Mighty Being. In love there is no fear, and the school of *Bhakti*, or devotion, has classified it into two categories;—the one considering God as the Supreme Master, or Father, who demands an awe-striking superiority over everything, and the other regarding him as the most Beloved. God has created and maintains a sort of distance from all the subjects who are controlled by him as his creations. The fear of God is due to the power of God. We have a fear of the ocean, and we would not like to go near it. The reason is the magnitude and the expanse that is there in front of which we look like puny nothings.

We are frightened when we look at the skies above. The expanse seems to be so impossible of even thinking that for a long time we cannot gaze at the distance and be at peace with ourselves. We are also frightened at the distance of the Sun from ourselves and the largeness of the astronomical universe that is gigantically staring at us as an awesome something. So is the concept of God in one type of devotion, which goes by the name of *Aisvarya-pradhāna-bhakti*, devotion where the predominant feature is the feeling of the glory, the might and the magnificence of God,—his greatness. But there is another kind of love which regards God as the reality within one's own heart, incapable of separation from one's own self, as the dearest of all dear ones, and the most lovable of all the loved objects, and the sweetest conceivable thing ever. Such a devotion is categorised in the *Bhakti* schools under the name, *Mādhurya-pradhāna-bhakti*, where the soul surges forth to God in a melting love and affection which is ordinarily difficult to entertain in respect of an almighty power before which we are just nothing, as it were. Yet, when God is understood in his proper form and relationship with us, we cannot but love him as our own soul. Often we feel that he is not our own soul, as we are small individuals. And, therefore, we are afraid of God; but we are also convinced that it is impossible for us to be without him, and our existence itself is his existence and our soul is he, our love for him would be identical with our own self which excels every other kind of love. So, the *Mādhurgatā*, or the

sweetness of devotion, automatically follows from our acceptance of the inseparability of God from our own self or soul,—from everything. These are the implied suggestive aspects of the teachings in the few verses of the Gītā concerning the four types of devotees.

The distance between man and God becomes less as one rises higher in love and devotion, finally the distance getting abolished altogether, so that the Supreme Object which is God becomes the Supreme Subject which is the Soul of the cosmos. The fearsome distance of God from us gets gradually diminished as we proceed further though the Chapter of the Gītā, onwards, right from the Seventh. A time will come when we will see nothing but God, and we would be nowhere there, and that time has to come. Are we fit to realise God in this life? Can anyone touch one's own heart and say, "Yes, in this very birth, I am going to be absorbed in God's Being", or do we have a suspicion, "Well, this is not for me"? This difficulty is taken up in a very beautiful manner at the very commencement of the Eighth Chapter. Most of us would feel diffident even about the entertaining of the idea of this all-consuming Absolute. We are terrorised even by the very thought itself. It would mean that we may pass away from this world without having any contact with this mighty Reality. What will happen to us when we die? What are the chances available to us in this great path of the soul towards God? Is it possible for us to have at least

a hope of the possibility of such a realisation, or contact with God? Or, are we to die like flies or moths with no hope whatsoever? Before answering this question, the Teacher introduces us into another set of cosmological ideals. The direct answer does not come forth immediately. The introduction to the theme comes from the very mouth of Arjuna himself, who puts the question as to what all these mean.

What is Brahman, what is the Absolute, what is the Creator? What is the universe? And what is the individual? What is the relationship between these, and what is the way that we are to adopt in order that we may contact Reality at least after the leaving of the body in this life, if not possible in this very life? The points touched in the query sweep over almost every philosophical principle. We have no hopes of seeing God in this life; it is an absolutely hopeless affair. Well, then, even afterwards, is it such a hopeless matter? Is there a chance of our beholding God's glory or contacting him at least after death? Or, are we to be a miserable specimen even after quitting this physical body here? All these are the suggestions behind Arjuna's questions at the beginning of the Eighth Chapter; and we have to take a little time to understand the answer that Krishna gives to these basic issues.



XIII
COSMOLOGY AND ESCHATOLOGY

In the Eighth Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā we have an important departure made from the trend followed in the earlier ones, *viz.*, a slight emphasis on the structure of the cosmos, for the purpose of elucidating the fate of the soul after the shedding of the physical body, and also to elucidate the possibility of contacting the Supreme Being in this sojourn of cosmic existence. The questions with which the Chapter commences are ushered in by a statement made towards the end of the Seventh Chapter itself. We are supposed to conceive the ultimate Reality in all its facets,—the objective, the subjective as well as the universal phases of its manifestation ; as *Adhibhūta*, *Adhyātma*, *Adhidaiva*, *Param Brahma*, the Absolute-All. One who envisages the Supreme Being as inclusive of everything that is objective, inclusive also of everything that is personal and individual, as well as what is transcendent, and also what is relational, activistic and social,—a person who can visualise the Supreme in this manner has really understood it and knows it perfectly. This was the indicative dictum of the last verse of the Seventh Chapter, though mentioned rather casually. This impulsion to greater secrets stirred up a question in the mind of Arjuna, on the details of the suggestion.

The way in which we visualise any particular thing is the outlook we entertain in respect of that thing. Usually, we do not have a comprehensive idea of anything in this world. When we gaze at an object or think of any particular thing, we regard it with some sort of blinkers limiting our vision of that object, whereby we ignore certain other aspects which also go to constitute its existence. A mother will look upon her child in a particular manner though that child may be the king of a country. To the mother, the son is not merely a king, there is also some personal relationship there. To a client, a judge in a court is a particular thing, and he is not merely one among the many other human beings, though he is also that. The relationship between the customer and the dealer, and various other kinds of relationship in terms of which we visualise objects, are examples of the conditioning factors in our knowledge. This limitation that is automatically imposed upon the manner of knowing anything gets transferred also to our idea of God, the Absolute, Brahman, the Ultimate Reality, so that it is not infrequently that we look upon God as a father, a mother, a creator, a preserver, a destroyer, a loving friend, a merciful companion, the liberator, and so on. But God can really be none of these, though he is also, no doubt, the all, everyone and everything. The universe of external experience does not stand outside the existence of God. This world of our experience does not exhaust the being of God. The world cannot contain the whole of God within itself,

because it is an effect, and he is the Cause. At the same time, it cannot exist outside him, for it is inseparably related to him. The external world consists of the five elements which rarely attract our attention in our daily existence. We do not bother much about the five elements, though they are there as a very important thing before us. The world includes also what we call human relationship and activity in the field of the social atmosphere (*Adhiyajña*), and all agency in every enterprise. The world of physical Nature is what is known here as the *Adhibhūta*, the world of the elements, Nature in its completeness. But, to us, the world of experience is also something else, in addition to the physical elements only. There is a mysterious involvement of ours in our external affairs and this involvement is something indescribable, which keeps us in anxiety, in a state which is occasioned not merely by the existence of the five elements but by the peculiar attitude of people everywhere, among themselves. If we are today cautious and are aware of world affairs, these concerns that are in our minds are not the products of the five elements. We are not thinking of what the earth will do tomorrow or the water or the fire or the air or the sky will be intending to do the next day. The world of activity and the world of concern is the world of human relationship,—*Adhiyajña*. And this psychological world occasions activity in specialised directions. This is the world of action, the world of *Adhiyajña*, where we sacrifice ourselves for a particular cause. The motive which drives

us into activity of any kind and compels us to maintain relationships with other people is comprehended within this restless field of daily sacrifice and mutual adjustment in various ways.

But we have not yet reached the state of understanding the relevance of the five elements to our personal lives. We are too human and too matter-of-fact in our evaluations of things and, for us, the world of experience is the world of human beings and human relationships, which is all that is important. But if we go a little into the details of what we have observed earlier on a different occasion we may remember that any kind of experience by the subject, the individual, of any atmosphere outside, is not possible without the presence of a transcendental element intervening. This Mystery of life is the *Adhidaiva*, the Divinity that shapes our ends, which controls our destinies, which decides every factor everywhere, and which has a say in every matter. It has something to do with every little bit of thing in the world. There is no event taking place anywhere, at any time, without the intervention of this transcendent principle which mysteriously planks itself between the subject and the object, so that, as the great hymn in the Atharva-Veda, addressed to Varuna, says, there is always a secret observer of what transpires between two persons everywhere. One may be in the highest heavens, in the garden of Eden, or in the nether regions, one may be in the farthest corner of the earth, it matters not where

one is, one's secret thoughts and transpirations and feelings will be observed by a subtle principle which is pursuing all things wherever anything be. That subtle being is the *Adhidaiva*, God himself observing all in his own mysterious manner, by the very fact of his being. This is the great Divinity which superintends over all things and all events that happen inwardly as well as outwardly.

Our own self is the *Adhyātma*, the deepest self in us, which, again, is inseparable, ultimately, from the Godhead. It is the essential essence of which everyone is constituted,—you, and I, and everybody, and everything. As every little ripple or wave in the ocean is nothing but the vast ocean, the secret hidden at the recess of every individual occasion is the *Adhyātma*, the Ātman so-called, the self in us, which is incapable of further reduction, beyond which one cannot go, and beneath which there is nothing. The deepest and bottom-most being of our personality is what is called the Ātman. And even as the essence of the wave is the ocean, so is the essence of our own personality the Absolute. And another mysterious term used here in this connection is *Karma*, a word with which everyone is familiar and which is very much identified with action or the result of action. But here, in this Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, it is used in a special sense. The force which causes the emanation of beings is the *Karma* spoken of here ; the power which ejects all particulars, every evolute arising from the Central Cause. And all the little

Karmas that we perform here, your action and my action and anybody's work, is a reverberation, a sympathetic motivation, a continuation, a reflection or a refraction of this Cosmic Impulse for the great universal purpose. Here is a secret which carries within its bosom an importance of its own. All action is, in the end, a universal action, and it is not 'your' action or 'my' action. There is, ultimately, no such thing as your activity or my activity. Every rumbling or little noise made by every wave in the ocean is a work of the bowels of the ocean itself. So does the Supreme Will operate through every bit of our actions and even the winking of our eyes. The little breath that we breathe is nothing but the Cosmic Breath pulsating through our individuality; our intelligence is a faint reflection of the Cosmic Intelligence; our very existence is a part of the Universal Existence. The Bhagavadgītā is driving us into this great gospel of Karma-Yoga, a principle which we cannot easily understand unless we know what Karma is, and why should it become Yoga, how it can be a divine aspiration. We are all afraid of Karma, we are frightened by the very word, because Karma binds, and so Karma we do not want, we want to get rid of it altogether. It is the speciality of the teaching of the Gītā that it frees us from this fear of the incubus of Karma and tells us that Karma cannot bind us, and will not bind, if we know what Karma is. The metaphysical significance of Karma here inculcated in the Gītā is that it is the Will of God operating, it is the creative power of the Absolute,

that is the *Visarga*, the ejection, the emanation or the proceeding of all things from the Cause of all causes. The answers to the questions raised by Arjuna, stirred by the earlier statement in the Seventh Chapter, are given in these few words at the commencement of the Eighth Chapter.

Now, with this philosophical or cosmical background of our understanding of the entire scheme of creation, we can have some idea as to what will happen to us after our death here. And one of the questions put by Arjuna is : What is the way in which a person has to conduct himself at the time of his departure from this world, for the sake of contacting God ? The major part of the Eighth Chapter is taken up with this discussion of the fate of the soul after death. But all this exposition is implicit in this very precise enunciation of the cosmological basis of the whole of the pattern of creation, which involves the pattern of our mutual relationships among ourselves as well as the relation between ourselves and the world of Nature outside. Whatever we think deeply in our hearts and feel perpetually in our consciousness, throughout our life, as if it is a part of our very existence itself, that shall fructify itself into a form of experience after we leave this world. This is the basic psychology of rebirth, transmigration or metempsychosis. Rebirth is not a punishment that is meted out to a person by God, or the Creator. It is a natural law operating on account of the very finitude of the individual, and also on account of

the inseparability of the finite from the Infinite. Transmigration is a blind groping, in darkness, by the individual, in the direction of the Supreme Reality. By fumbling and falling down and getting up several times, one learns by experience the way to God. Birth and death, as a series of experiences, constitute a kind of training given to us, by the trial-and-error method, so that we do not immediately learn the wisdom of life even if we take millions of births and die several times, because the trial-and-error method is not always the way of knowledge proper ; it is not the way of direct illumination. We fall down several times and then, somehow, gain some idea as to how we have fallen, —that is a different matter. But knowledge is an inward enlightenment which prevents us from falling into the pit, rather than the strange thing which expects us to fall down and then learn that we should not fall again.

Whatever we entertain in our hearts, as the dearest of our objectives, that we shall become, that we shall contact, that we shall experience, and that we shall have. Every desire has to be fulfilled, for no desire can go unfulfilled in the inexhaustible scheme of God's Kingdom. Therefore, every little desire, though it may look small and insignificant on the surface, has the support of the whole cosmos at its back, just as every little drop and ripple in the ocean has the force of the ocean at the base. That is why every desire gets rewarded. It is connected finally with the Fulfiller of all

desires. And whatever we ask shall be given to us in this infinite reservoir and resourceful treasury of God's creation. And if we entertain the thought of the Supreme Absolute, God himself, at the time of passing, we shall contact him, and reach him. But we should also be careful to note that it is not given to every person to think of God at the time of death, because the last thought is the fruit of the tree of the life that we lived throughout this empirical sojourn. We cannot sow the seed of thistle and thorn and expect apples to come out from that shrub. Whatever we have sown, that we shall reap. This is the law of action and reaction. So when we live a life of aspiration for God, we should not go by the theological dogma of it being possible for one to think of God at the time of death, while today one can think anything one likes. We have to emphasise again that, just as the fruit of a tree is nothing but the essence of the whole tree, and it cannot be anything different from what the tree is in essence, our last thought is the cumulative force with which the whole personality rushes out like a rocket to its destination, as a consequence of what we have thought and felt and done throughout our life. We cannot think something there at the end which we have not at all thought when alive here in our normal life. Just as butter comes out of milk as its cream and essence, the last thought comes as a cream of what we have thought throughout our life. It cannot be entirely different. So the idea that we can think of God at the time of death, and Yoga is only for old

people is a stupid notion of those who do not know the law of things, because, firstly, one does not know when that last moment will come. It can be just now, it can be tomorrow, it can be today, and to imagine that it is to come after fifty years is obviously the greatst ignorance one can conceive. Secondly, how could we be sure that we would be thinking of the Absolute when we are passing! Mostly, one will be shocked, the nerves will appear to crack, the mind will become unconscious and the person will be taken unawares ; at that time who can think of God ?

The practice of Yoga is enjoined upon every seeker throughout his life, for the purpose of entertaining this supreme completeness, which is the cumulative outcome of the whole of thought, feeling and will, a veritable cosmic thought which one has to enshrine in one's heart as the final goal. Here, again, we have a little philosophy behind the entertaining of thoughts and feelings in our lives, how they have a cosmical significance and decide our future because of their relationship with the total pattern of creation. What happens to us after we die? Where do we go? To some extent, this question has been answered by what we have said already. Whatever we want, that we shall get ; and where we wish to go, there we will be taken ; and what we have done here, that will be repaid to us. Very terrible law, and yet deeply consoling. It is impartial like justice, and the law of gravitation, or the working of the universe. There are no friends

and no foes for this law. It becomes, therefore, incumbent on every seeker of Truth to be honestly aspiring for God, to live the life of a search for the Spirit, rather than a seeking for material possessions and the pleasure of the senses. The Karma that we perform in life has to be set in tune with the great Will of God, a reference to which has already been made earlier. If we regard our actions as our own personal effort directed for an ulterior motive or a little material benefit, that force, that particular action, will recoil upon us as the *Karmaphala* or the fruit of action. But what for is the philosophy of the Bhagavadgītā if not to enlighten us on the fact that all action is divine action with a universal motivation. If we can plant ourselves on this knowledge of the cosmicality of all activities that take place in the world, we become instruments in the hands of the Universal Power, and we are no more agents of action but vehicles of action. Then, it is unavoidable on our part to entertain the thought and feeling of God as the supreme Actor or the Agent of everything. A life that is propelled by the principle of *Karma-Yoga* cannot avoid the enshrining of God-Thought throughout its tenure. If we forget the presence of the mighty Absolute even for a moment, action becomes our action, and it redounds upon us, and we shall be responsible, then, for its consequences. We are, therefore, to perpetually maintain the consciousness of our inseparability from the Supreme Creator.

This is a mighty gospel before us of God's

creation, of birth and death, and the fate of the soul after the passing from this body. Some more explanation is offered in this very Chapter on the peculiar courses followed by the soul after death, a subject which is dealt with in detail in the Upanishads but very precisely touched upon in the Bhagavadgītā. There are various avenues of exit from this world. And the way in which we shall leave this plane, the path that we shall trek, will depend upon the thoughts that we entertained, once again to repeat the same point. The extent of the unselfishness that motivated our life here will decide also the extent of our success in approximating God-realisation. The Gītā mentions two important paths, known as the Northern and the Southern, or the path of Light and the path of darkness, as they are usually called. The path of Light is supposed to be that particular way of the ascent of the soul by which it rises from one stage of perception to another, from level to level. These are all mystical steps inexplicable by ordinary language, and unintelligible to the mind. Commentators have gone into great details in the explanation of these paths, but they are all inadequate in the end. No one can know what these mysteries are. But suffice it to say that the path of Light implies a gradually ascending series of movements of the consciousness of the soul in the direction of larger and larger dimensions of experience, until it reaches the consummate position, *viz.* merger in God, entry into the being of the Absolute. It is available only to those who have practiced meditation, throughout

their lives, on God, in an unselfish manner, expecting nothing from God, and seeking only union with God. But the path of darkness is the path of return. Whatever good we do in this world is repaid in its own coin and our good deeds bear fruit in the after life. And just as our bank-balance can get exhausted one day if we go on drawing cheques continuously, our good deeds can exhaust themselves by experience. And when the momentum of our good deeds is spent out by experience in our future lives, we are supposed to revert to the condition from where we started. Hence actions should not be performed with any personal motivation. Even when we perform a charitable deed, it should not be done as if it is a prerogative of our effort. The great point made out in the statement of Christ, 'let not the left hand know what the right hand does', has a philosophical meaning behind it, apart from its being an injunction on good motivation. Our good deeds are not supposed to be 'our' deeds, they do not belong to 'us', for no action can belong to us, really. But if we insist, 'I have done a good deed, I have performed a charitable act, I have shown mercy', then we shall reap the fruit of that mercy and good deed, no doubt. When that force of that particular action is over, we are reborn, to continue our old work, again. Otherwise, when we do our deeds and works in this world as a vehicle through which God's Will operates, neither good nor bad will cling to our personality. The good and the bad are words which we use to signify the quality of an action, and when the action is not

ours, the quality also does not belong to us, it goes to him who has done it. All this is difficult for us to contemplate, for we are not made in this way. We cannot think in an impersonal manner. We cannot imagine, even for a moment, that we are not the doers of deeds. We have to be very humble on the spiritual path and we cannot imagine that we are on the topmost pedestal. Who can believe, even for a second, that one is not the doer of action? We may not say this in words, but do not we feel in our hearts that we are doers? Well, this is a very serious matter, indeed. But, if God has taken possession of us, and if we know that these two paths, the Northern and the Southern, or whatever they are, are only the empirical movements of the consciousness lodged in the body, and that no such passage would be necessary for the soul that is united with God, to such a soul that we are to be, liberation is assured, and God becomes the All-in-All, the Friend and Supporter and the Benefactor in every way.

God comes nearer and nearer to us as we proceed through the Chapters of the Gītā. In the very early Chapters, no mention was made, practically, of God. It was all an emphasis on self-discipline and effort for self-integration; then we were introduced into the cosmology and the creative forces that were operating behind things. And then the question was raised as to what happens to one after one leaves the body, and our relationship with God, the Creator, was discussed. The Eighth Chapter

somewhat stands midway between the earlier chapters and the later ones, giving us a task of something of the earlier phases and something of the future ones, also. From the Ninth Chapter onwards, the religious consciousness gets unfolded, whereby to live life would be to live religion, and to exist in the world would mean to live for God.

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XIV

THE GLORY AND MAJESTY OF THE ALMIGHTY

A powerful religious impulse permeates the Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Chapters of the Bhagavadgītā. The religious consciousness reaches its culmination by certain specific stages in these central Chapters. The presence of God becomes a more intimate affair than it was in the earlier stages. God does not any more remain merely as a Creator, a transcendent Father, capable of attainment, perhaps, after the shedding of the physical body. In the Eighth Chapter, and even in the earlier ones, we do not seem to have been given any hope of God being capable of contact in this particular life. It seemed that the chances are remote, and even when it looked that there is some possibility, it also appeared that this possibility is only after death, and not in this life. But God is not a future reality, he is an Immediate Presence. The awe-striking distance that the soul maintains between itself and God converts God into a future possibility and not a present existence. Everyone of us must be having an idea in the mind that God can be contacted only tomorrow or the day after, after some years, or perhaps at the end of several births, and not just now. This difficulty is purely psychological, and it is based on a notion that the

soul has its own independent structure. However-much we may be told that God is All-in-All, it does not easily become possible for the mind to accept that there is a timeless immediacy in God's Presence even in this particular life itself. God is a 'Here' and a 'Now'. We cannot imagine what is timelessness. When we conceive of God, or the attainment of liberation, we consider it as a fag-end in the time series, and the notion of time does not leave us. The idea that we are in space and time has become part and parcel of our consciousness and existence. So, if we are in time, we canot extricate the presence of God from the time-series ; God becomes a future possibility and not an immediate realisation. Not so, is the fact emphasised here. God is the Supreme Inclusiveness which enfolds into its being all souls, all things, all individuals, everything that exists, in any manner. There is nothing on earth or in heaven which is not finally rooted in God's being, so that nothing can ever be, if God is not to be. We cannot be a present being and God a future existence; that would be a fallacy of argument. If God were a future existence, we too would become future beings and not have a present life. But we are sure that we are presently existing, we are here just now. Yet, we cannot feel that God is just now, we adore him as a future attainment. This is the defect in the time-consciousness which worms itself gradually into our being, so that we cannot think except in terms of space and time. But the Bhagavadgītā tries its best to teach the eternity of God and not merely a durationless extension of God's

existence. Whatever was, whatever is and whatever shall be,—all this is engulfed in God's Infinitude. He is the Cause of all causes, and a Cause existing not outside the effect but inseparable from all effects. In a way we may say that God is the Cause as well as all the effects. He is the Creator and also the creation. Knowing this truth, blessed souls adore him and worship him, sing his names as the One Absolute (Ekatvena), as the manifold universe (Prithaktvena), and as every particular thing in the world (Bahudhā). Omnifaced is the Supreme Being.

Every speck of space, every atom of matter, can be regarded as a vehicle which reflects one face of God. To think God would be to drown one's self in an indescribable completeness whereby one loses one's presence, the individuality evaporates like mist before the blazing Sun. But if there is any desire in the mind to worship God for personal purposes, if there is a desire to go to heaven and enjoy the delights of celestial life, it should be noted that even meritorious deeds have an end, they exhaust themselves when the force of Karma is depleted, and there is a reversal of the agent of action to the state from where it rose. There is a return to the earth even after one reaches heaven, and so it is an unreliable satisfaction. But those who are capable of tuning their minds in an undivided manner to the All-inclusive Almighty Being,—they lack nothing. There will be no necessity to go to heaven for enjoying delights or pleasures.

Whatever is required will be provided to them, then and there, by the law of God. And this law works in such a way that it is the height of spontaneity of fulfilment. One need not have to ask the law to operate in any particular manner. It works of its own accord. The great promise that is given in one of the verses in the Ninth Chapter is that God will provide us with everything that we need. Not merely that, He shall take care of everything that belongs to us, and protect not only ourselves but also whatever are our needs. Even thousands of fathers and mothers cannot equal God in compassion and concern, in love and affection, in goodness and kindness. The love that God has for man is a millionfold greater than the love that man can imagine in himself in respect of God. This mighty law of God operates in this manner because of his being present everywhere, at every time. If he had been a limited being confined to space and time, he would have taken time to act, and would have to cover some distance to travel for the purpose of executing a deed. God does not travel, because he is not in space ; and he does not take time to act, because he is eternity. This is the difference between the operation of God and the actions of other beings. Even the words 'instantaneous action' are a poor apology for the magnificent manner in which God works. Our language is ridden over with spatial concepts and temporal ideas. So even the highest notion that we can entertain in our minds is shackled by spatio-temporal limitations. It is not given to us to contemplate God as he is

in himself, We can only approximate ourselves, we can only try our best, to touch the bare fringe of his being, but the true glory of God is beyond comprehension.

In the Tenth Chapter, the presence of God as a superb glory in every from of excellence is described with particular instances quoted as illustrations. Anything that is supernal, whether in knowledge or power, anything that is superhuman in the way of its action, should be considered as a force or expression of God. There are things in this world which lie beyond human control and understanding. Everyone knows what these things are : Natural laws operate in a superhuman manner, and there are occasions when phenomena manifest themselves in the world which speak of the existence of powers over which man has no control and of which man can have no knowledge. These excellences of tremendous might and glory are the *Vibhūtis*, the majestic manifestations of God. God is Supreme Majesty, indescribable glory, unimaginable bliss and joy, by the very thought of which we would run into a state of rapture and ecstasy. Anything which stirs the soul from within can be regarded as a manifestation of God. There are things even in this world which stimulate our souls, whereby our entire being seems to well up into action, and we do not then merely think as intellectuals or feel as minds ; we are transported above ourselves, we are thrown overboard and freed from the limitations of body

and mind. Very rarely do we have such experiences. In utter agony and utter joy we have satisfactions of this type, which go beyond the body-mind limitations. When God touches us, we cease to be human beings and we do not think as intellects or minds at that time. And it is impossible to describe in language what would be that state when we are magnetised by the glory of God. We melt away into nothing, we cease to be, as if we are possessed by a supernal beatitude. For those who have not passed through such experiences, these raptures are only words without sense, they might convey some grammatical dictionary-meaning, but the spirit of it is lost when the soul is not active, and God is present only when the soul is awake, for God is the Soul of the universe. And when the Soul speaks, it is God summoning. Such glories are visible even in this world. In mighty incarnations, sages, saints and seers, and in the various natural phenomena, anything that stuns us, transports us, strikes us with wonder, as a miracle, and attracts us wholly, from which we cannot turn our eyes away, that which absorbs us entirely,—such a thing is a ray of God's manifestation. When we hear all these things, we do not know what to say and what to think in our minds. We stand stupified at this glory and mystery behind creation ; stupefaction is the only word, nothing else can describe our condition. Our minds cease to think and our feelings do not any more operate. We do not know at that time whether we are alive or dead, whether we are, or whether we are not.

Such a condition we get into when we are prepared for God's vision. These descriptions of divine glory, which are delineated in the Ninth and Tenth Chapters, excite the curiosity in the deepest spirit of Arjuna's aspiration, and leave him wondering if he could have a vision of these glories.

"What do you mean by this grandeur that transports us in this manner? Who is this Almighty and how could we have a realisation, an experience of this Divine Glory?" The great Teacher is standing there;—Krishna is before Arjuna; and the disciple implores the great Master, "Is it possible for a person like me to have a vision of this Glory, a direct experience of that which you have been describing up to this time as the be-all and end-all of all things? And surrendering himself wholly to the great Incarnation, the disciple speaks, "If you consider me fit enough to have a vision of this Glory, may I be endowed with this blessedness. Deign to shower this Grace upon me". It is in the Eleventh Chapter that the poet of the Bhagavadgītā bursts forth into expressions which try to convey in a highly enrapturing language the phenomenon which revealed Itself before the seeking soul, Arjuna. Words have to be employed as vehicles in the description of this Glory because we have no other instruments available in the world. All explanation is through words. So even the highest poetic genius has to employ images which belong to the world of perceptions. We speak of God as Light, but we

cannot imagine any light which is greater than the light of the Sun, for us that is the supreme light, and the inclusiveness which God is, the infinitude which is God's being, has also to be explained in a similar manner by imagery and comparison. Imagine thousands of Suns rising and splashing forth simultaneously in the sky, dazzling the eyes of the beholders; no one has seen in one's life what it is to see thousands of Suns at one stroke, these, again, are only words for us with no significance. We cannot even dream what it would be to see several thousands of Suns coming together and blazing in the eastern horizon. We can only console ourselves by thinking we understand what it is. Even the great immortality that we are thinking of is a shadow, as it were, cast by the super-immortal being of God, says the Veda. Not merely is God this supernal Light which blinds the eyes of the soul, but God is infinitude, again something which we cannot understand. What is infinitude? Every blessed thing is there transformed into its originality, not in its crude, distorted, reflected form, as we see it here today. The originals of things get revealed in the Supreme Being of God. These are the archetypes of all things. Philosophers tell us that we are all shadows, here moving in the world of phenomena. Everyone of us has a reality beyond ourselves. Even our own realities are not here! We are above in a noumenal existence, while this phenomenal universe is a conglomeration of shadows and reflections of the true archetypes. God is not a totality of

shadows, a bunch of finite particulars. God does not become complete by a bringing together of all the individuals conceivable in the world. You and I and everything imaginable put together do not make God, because these visibles are all shadows, unrealities in the end, and a multitude of unrealities do not go to constitute one reality. We are far below the level of understanding what all this can be. Our minds are not made in such a way as to be able to grasp what these originals could be like. Our souls are our originals, the body and mind are reflections. But when we think of ourselves, we think only of bodies and minds, our real soul is beyond our comprehension. The soul is in ourselves; the soul that we really are, is the original in us, and that is the representation of God. God is present in us as the soul in us, and not merely as a particular expression of name and form in space and time. That is why when the great vision is described in the Gītā, we are told that perfection was seen everywhere in that Glory. One does not see ugliness and suffering, which are consequences of the finite vision which wrests one particular from another and does not read the meaning of anything with relevance to all other things. The vision of God is the vision that God himself has in respect of the whole of creation. To see God is to see through the eyes of God. And that would be a veritable realisation of the Soul of the universe. Here the perceptive faculties and the cognitive processes cease to function. It is not the intellect that understands or the feeling

that feels God's presence, it is the bursting forth of the intuitional integrality by which what is intended is a totality of grasp of the whole of the cosmos at one stroke and in simultaneity, and not as a succession of phenomena. We do not count one thing after another thing as we do here in this world when we try to see a series of objects. We cannot see with our eyes all things at once. Even when it appears that we are seeing many things at one time, we are really seeing one thing after another thing in a series, in a time-process, as if they are extended in space. But, as we observed, God-vision is a timeless, spaceless experience. And, therefore, it is not a visualisation of many things one after another in a series, as in an arithmetical computation. It is a timeless grasp of the eternity of Being, where everything is a here-and-now and not afterwards or somewhere else. Everything is just here, and everything is just now. Here is the the abolition of space and a transcendence of time. Our spatial and temporal body-mind-complex vanishes, melts away into the supernal menstruum of the Absolute. Such was the vision which the great Lord condescended to bestow upon the seeking Arjuna.

And what one feels at that time is, again, poetically portrayed in the great hymnology which fills the whole of the Eleventh Chapter. It does not actually mean that one will be speaking something there. The poet of the Gītā has to express himself in language, and so he uses a poetic style to

demonstrate the feeling of the soul at the time of this divine possession and experience, at which time it becomes giddy with God-Consciousness. The soul does not utter words in human language. It shudders from the roots and shakes at the very bottom and it does not think and feel but melts away gradually into the awe. This process of the evaporating of the soul-consciousness into the Consciousness of All-Being is the significance behind the exuberant description of the prayers which Arjuna seems to have offered when he was blessed with the Divine Vision. The functions of the individual cease automatically, and completely. Neither does one speak, nor see, nor hear; not is there any particularised sensation. All the empirical faculties are brought together into a concentrated oneness and get gathered up in the soul within instead of operating separately as in ordinary perception. The whole being is centred in one indivisible splendour of the soul, and it is the soul that flies to the Supreme Soul. And even as the soul that beholds this vision does not express itself in any language but indescribably transforms itself into the All-in-All God, so, too, God does not speak in a language, in the words that we utter through our mouths. Yet a response from this Mighty Being seems to come in answer to the prayer of the soul that beholds the vision, and the Almighty speaks in a transcendental language of the unity of everything with everything else.

The feeling or the notion in the individual that it does anything at all is a fallacy, and here in the

context of the Mahābhārata, where the Bhagavadgītā occurs, Arjuna is told that the war has already taken place, it is already concluded, victory has already been won, there is nothing more to be done by anyone. The individuals are just instruments. "In a timeless comprehension, I have done everything that is to be done, in the firmament of infinity and eternity". To Arjuna, to us, from the point of view of time, the Mahābhārata might appear to be a future event that is yet to take place. But to the Omnipresent Absolute', which has neither time nor place, it has eternally taken place and its results are decided once and for all. It is added that everyone cannot have this vision. It is not that merely for the asking it suddenly comes, unless the asking comes from the soul. Our little charities, a few good deeds and some studies that we make are inadequate for the purpose. God is not a cheap substance that one can purchase for a few dollars or pounds. Impossible is this vision; even the gods crave to have this blessing at least once. Any amount of learning or scriptural lore is insufficient for this fulfilling attainment. All the austerities that we may perform, all the efforts that we can think of from our side cannot promise us this blessedness of God-vision. Then what is the solution? How do we get it? A whole-souled surrender of the self is the way. Unless the self melts away into the All-Self, this vision is not going to materialise itself. Any individualistic austerity, or, for the matter of that, any performance whatsoever which retains the individuality intact, even in the name of

religion or spiritual practice, will go counter to the requirements of this great realisation. The condition is this: In our spiritual practices, do we long to maintain our individualities? Though it is true that we are spiritually engaged or religiously conscious, are we secretly hugging our own ego or personality? If this is to be there, the vision is far off. Whoever performs works for His sake, whoever regards Him as the Supreme Soul, and bears not enmity to anyone, looks upon all things with an equal vision, with no difference of high and low, or even better or worse, whoever whole-heartedly considers this wonder as the only goal of life, and everything else as merely an accessory or an antecedent to this great Realisation, one who is possessed with this spirit of aspiration which transfigures the whole of one's being in the love of the One God, one who seeks God, and God alone, and nothing else, in the highest sense of the term,—to such a person God-Vision will be an immediate experience. Inasmuch as there is no isolation or individuality in God, to have His experience or Vision, one must also be free from the individuality of the self. It appears that God alone can behold God. God experiences; God realises God. It is not that man, as a man, maintains himself as man, and then reaches God. It is not you or I that can attain God, but God-vision bursting itself within itself, and God looking at Himself in God. It is a mystical enigma, a secret available only to sincere souls, and everyone is blessed with this beatitude of experience, when the heart is sincere.



XV

THE WAY AND THE GOAL

The glorious vision of the Cosmic Form was magnificently described in the Eleventh Chapter ; and towards its end it was also suggested that nothing but whole-souled devotion can be an appropriate means to this great achievement. Now the Twelfth Chapter commences with a query which immediately follows as a consequence of this suggestion. This Great Being, the Supreme Absolute, is capable of attainment through utter self-transcendence alone, a sacrifice of the self in the All-Self. It appears that this experience is impossible of attainment unless the soul raises itself to the status of this Supreme Omnipresence. But this requirement on the part of the soul seems to be a practically impossible affair and the only thing that appears to be available to the soul is humble devotion, and surrender of itself to the Great Lord. Which of the two methods is to be preferred,—a humble and simple surrendering of oneself to the Glory of the Absolute in utter Childlike behaviour of dependence or a strenuous effort to rouse oneself to the Being of the Absolute itself, by communion of self with self, in an impersonal merger of the individual in the All ? The Great Master is, indeed, very considerate in his reply and

gives an emphatic solution to the effect that in the light of the difficulties that are involved in the practice of an impersonal meditation on the Supreme Absolute, devotion to the very same Supreme Being in a personal relationship is to be regarded as the better way. Here, in this so-called preference of the one to the other, no comparison is involved. Generally, when we make a choice, a sort of comparison or contrast seems to be unavoidable and a sense of inferiority is associated with that which is not preferred. But not so here is the case. The love of God which the soul evinces in its aspiration for liberation is not in any way incompatible with the fire of the spirit which bursts forth in the form of a melting away of the self in the All, in a supreme immanence of impersonality ; for those who are embodied people, who cannot avoid the notion of the body, those whose consciousness is lodged in a physical tabernacle, for such persons any kind of conception which is wholly impersonal is unthinkable. We as human beings cannot imagine what utter impersonality is, because he who is a person cannot think of the impersonal. To be able to appreciate the significance of utter impersonality, one has to rise to the level of this capacity to appreciate. The feeble instrument of human individuality, which is the mind lodged in this body, cannot comprehend the lofty meaning of the spiritual impersonality of God. Such being the case, "I feel", says Krishna, "that devotion to the Supreme Person is preferable and both these methods are paths that lead to the same goal".

Whatever be the method that we adopt, that will not matter much, inasmuch as the attainment is going to be uniform, and common in either case. An unnecessary subjection of oneself to torture under the notion of austerity, or *Tapas*, while the body is not prepared for it, would be unwelcome on the spiritual path. Spiritual practice is not a torturous suffering, it is not a sorrow that we are courting as a part of the requirement on the way. In fact the growth of the spirit from the lower level to the higher is like the spontaneous expansion of the dimension of anything that grows in the world, and when there is a growth of anything there is no pain involved in that process. The flowering of the bud is not a painful process, but the crushing of the bud in order to make it blossom with force would be an unnatural effort. The spiritual practice in the form of meditation on God should be a spontaneity of the efflorescence of consciousness and not any kind of painful pressure exerted upon the will, the mind, the feeling or the body. "Considering all these aspects", says Krishna, "Love of God as the Supreme Person is welcome, and to people in this world that is the only way possible. "Merge your mind and intellect in Me, and you shall abide in Me", is the Supreme admonition. A whole-souled absorption of all thought in God, to the exclusion of any other idea, is the highest spiritual practice. If it could be possible for anyone of us to be aware of God's Presence only, and nothing else, that would be the supreme blessedness; yes, if this could be possible,

go ahead with it. This is the foremost instruction to Arjuna, and to everyone who is on the path. But who can be so strong in one's mind and intellect as to be able to entertain God-thought alone throughout the day and the night ? So, if this kind of continuous contemplation on God is found to be impracticable, try your best to sit for meditation every day, take resort to *Abhyāsa-yoga*, a daily tenacious effort to fix the attention of the mind on God, notwithstanding that an entire absorption is not possible. Every day one should sit for one hour, two hours, or three hours, as the case may be, and see if the mind can maintain God-thought at least for these few hours, though not for the whole day. This is a second alternative and a teaching which is charged with a greater consideration and concession. People there are who find that even this is difficult. One cannot concentrate on God even for an hour. "This is not for me", says the mind. Then, take to recitation, chanting, singing of the glories of God. Take the Name of God, be in a state of ecstasy when you think of him even for a moment. Love him whole-heartedly from the bottom of your heart. Let your daily routine be infused with divine devotion. Work as an instrument in the hands of God, never forget for a moment the presence of this Supreme Parent. But even here some difficulty is there. We cannot go on chanting the Name of God with zeal and feeling for a protracted period; we are busy bodies, we are activists in temperament, we have a lot of work to do in the world, we are involved in the performance of

duties of various types. Such is our present position. "Well", says the Lord, "It does not matter ; even that is good". "But do not work with any motive, do not do any work with an expectation of fruits, because, while the performance of duty is incumbent upon you, the expectation of fruits vitiates the virtue, or the righteousness, of the action. The result of an action is not in your hands". This is a subject which has been dealt with in larger detail in the earlier chapters, especially in the Third, and it will be touched upon once again in the Eighteenth Chapter. "You have the right to do, but you have no right to expect a particular result from what you do, because the consequence of an action is determined by various factors over which you have no control. Hence, surrender the fruits of your actions to God, and engage yourself in action in this world, perform your duties, go on with your vocations in the spirit of true Karma-Yoga. And be an ideal person. Hate not, love not".

The concluding verses of the Twelfth Chapter go into details of the characteristics of a true devotee who lives in this world practically homeless, considering nothing as his own, not getting attached either positively or negatively to anything in the form of love or hate, and accepting anything that comes of its own accord, taking not any particular initiative, with no selfish interest involved, living to the extent practicable a life of impersonality, not putting on a behaviour or conduct on one's side

which will repel people or which will cause one's own self also to shrink away from others. A significant and meaningful point is made out here when we are told that we should live in such a way that neither should we shrink away from anything, nor should others shrink away from us. This is not an easy affair, only a God-man can live like that. But while all this is hard enough, it is up to us to aspire for this ideal, at least, and to entertain this wish as our goal, in our hearts. Pleasure and pain, censure and praise are equal to this great soul, for he is rooted in God-Being, and it is the responsibility of God to take care of him,--he is the greatest devotee. With this gospel the Twelfth Chapter concludes. And the teachings of the Gītā that follow further on take a different trend of approach altogether and detail certain philosophical aspects, and psychological points, which one comes across in the way of the practice, along the lines described in the earlier Chapters.

Often, exponents of the Bhagavadgītā have held that the last Six Chapters are something like an appendix to the central gospel which, for all purposes, concludes with the Eleventh, or the Twelfth Section. There are others who think that the purely metaphysical or philosophical considerations are taken up for discussion in the last Six Chapters, while the more important practical side is emphasised in the earlier ones. Whatever it be, the last Six are important enough in their own way, since they elucidate certain knotty issues which have

been just touched upon here and there at different places in the earlier Chapters. The Thirteenth Chapter pin-points its teaching on the principles known as *Purusha* and *Prakriti*,—we may say, consciousness and matter, or we may still boil down these correlatives to what we know as subject and object. The relationship between these two is to be understood, and the whole of philosophical deliberation is nothing but this study of the relation between subject and object, seer and seen, consciousness and matter, *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. The *Purusha* is the Soul of all beings, and God identifies himself with this Soul, here in the form of the great Incarnation, Krishṇa. The Knower is the Subject. The known is the object, or the Field. The Field of the operation of consciousness is the whole of objective phenomena. The *Kshetra* is this Field of operation; the operator upon this Field is the *Kshetrajna* The Knower of the Field is God himself. The Ātman, or the Self in all beings, which is present in all individuals, and is the subject in you and in me and in everything, is the Universal Subject at the same time.

"I am the Knower in all fields, and not merely in one field". The Ātman in my body is not confined to this body only; it is the Ātman uniformly present in all other bodies, also. And, so, there is a necessity to understand the distinction between the Knower of the Field, the Field, the nature of Knowledge, and the Goal of Knowledge. These are the themes of the Thirteenth Chapter. The

subject who is the individual percipient, or the conscious observer of things, is the conglomerate psycho-physical complex. This body constituted of the five gross elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether, and animated by the mind inside, working with the instrument of the intellect, filled with desires, is the subject proper. Here is a reference made to the Sāmkhya cosmological principles when, by suggestion, the principles of *Ahamkāra*, *Mahat* (*Buddhi*) and the *Avyakta* (*Prakriti*) are indicated. This individual complex which is physical as well as psychological at the same time, mind and body inseparably related, is the individual percipient, the empirical knower. And a knower is one who has knowledge. And what is correct knowledge, or right knowledge, or proper knowledge, and what is the opposite of it, is also mentioned further on. In this categorisation of the various components of correct knowledge some sort of system or order appears to have been followed. In the beginning virtues such as humility, unpretentiousness, etc. are mentioned, which are supposed to be the endowments of the student, a *brahmacharin*, a disciple working and studying under a *Guru*. For, together with this requirement of ethical qualities, we are told that one should be endowed with the requisites of servicefulness to the Guru, the Master, the Teacher. Purity of thought, purity of word and purity of deed is again emphasised. Detachment, at the same time, is pointed out once again as an indispensable. Gradual withdrawal from external entanglements of

every kind, culminating in the perception of the transiency of all things, the perishability of all objects, devotion to God, and the recognition of the existence of an eternal Reality behind all phenomena ;—all this is supposed to be knowledge. Perhaps, there is some subtle reference made to the various stages, or the Āśramas,—Brahmacarya, Gārhasthya, Vānaprasthya and Saṁnyāsa,—impliedly, in the suggestive verses. Every character, conduct, behaviour, action and outlook that is going to tend towards the acceptance of God's ultimate supremacy, perfection and absoluteness is to be considered as knowledge, and everything else is ignorance. To move towards God, and to feel an aspiration for God-realisation is knowledge, and ultimate or final knowledge is the conviction that God alone is, and nothing else ever can be. And if our understanding varies from this conclusion we are in a state of ignorance. Here is the substance, the character of right knowledge.

That which is to be known is the object of knowledge. We have many things in this world which we consider as objects of knowledge. We have the branches of learning, the sciences, the arts and all the apparatus of scholarship. We are curious to know many things and we regard various themes and subjects taught in the schools, colleges and universities as the objects of knowledge. But, according to the Bhagavadgītā, in this particular context, the object of knowledge is the Supreme Reality. An unreal thing cannot be regarded as an

object of right knowledge. If the object is unreal, the knowledge of it cannot be real, and inasmuch as we are speaking here about right knowledge, true knowledge, real knowledge, we are also concerned with the corresponding reality of the object. "I shall speak to you about the Supreme Goal, the object of knowledge", says the Teacher. This object of knowledge is not in any particular place. This is the peculiarity of this Great Object. Everything that we know, or anything that we are supposed to know in this world, is in some place and at some time,—it is not everywhere. But this Supreme Object is everywhere and it is not only at some time. It has neither past, nor present, nor future. It is timeless eternity. It is not in one place, because it envelops all things, and in a majestic epic language the verses speak here of the Omnipresent Almighty as having hands and feet and heads and eyes and ears everywhere, grasping everything, knowing everything and comprehending all things through every means, at once instantaneously, timelessly, here, and now. Undivided, yet appearing to be divided; existing at all times, yet appearing to manifest itself occasionally; free from the shackles of qualities and attributes of every kind, yet animating every quality and character and property; beyond the reach of all things is it, and yet is seated as the self within the hearts of everyone. It is moving and also unmoving. It is the light behind even the Sun itself. The brightness of the Sun is the shadow cast by the Glory of the Absolute. One may wonder where

this wondrous Light is. It is inside us, we are carrying it wherever we go, and yet we seem to be groping in darkness holding this lamp of wisdom and eternal brilliance within ourselves. We have here a concise presentation of the characteristics of the Object of knowledge, which is God-existence, expressed in a stimulating diction of poetic power.

We know what is right knowledge and the individual percipient. The relationship between the Knower and the Known is the crux of the whole matter of perceptional psychology; we do not know which influences what, the subject influences the object, or it is the other way round. In fact there is no question of one influencing the other, or one standing below or above the other; they are on a par one with the other, because one flows into the other and the one is impossible without the other, the subject cannot be without the object, and *vice-versa*, because the subject and the object, *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, are the two arms of one uniform Omnipresence. They are like the attributes mentioned by Spinoza in the exposition of his metaphysical reality. God works through two hands, as it were, the *Purusha* and *Prakriti* of the Sāmkhya philosophy. And the subject and the object we are speaking of, consciousness and matter, are not two different things, they are the two modes of one seamless being. Here the Bhagavadgītā is going head and shoulder above the dualistic philosophy of Sāmkhya dogmatism. The

Purusha, which is pure impersonal Consciousness, featureless transparency, works or rather appears to work, through the medium of *Prakriti* which is constituted of the three *Gunas*, or properties, known as *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. Now, again, we are to mention something about this in the Fourteenth Chapter which is devoted entirely to a discussion of the nature of these *Gunas*, the strands of *Prakriti*, the Field of action.

Pure equilibrium, harmony, luminosity, are the characteristics of *Sattva* ; distraction, activity, dissipation, division are the characteristics of *Rajas* ; inertia, stability, fixity, lethargy, sleepiness, are the characteristics of *Tamas*. The individual is a component of all these qualities, *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. We are not free from them at any time. Sometimes the one preponderates and at other times the other. We pass through various moods in our lives, sometimes dejected and melancholy are we, sometimes we are spirited and active and run about, and sometimes we are sublime and sober and enlightened in our outlook. But we do not maintain this attitude throughout the day and night, inasmuch as, like the spokes of a wheel that moves, which go up and down with the motion of the wheel, the properties of *Prakriti* do not maintain a single position always, they move with the evolutionary process of the cosmos. And with this evolutionary process we are also dragged as contents of this vast universe. Hence it is that we are not in any particular mood at all times. In the progres-

sion of the soul in its aspiration and travel to the Supreme Being it has to transcend the lower for the sake of the higher. It may appear, for all practical purposes, that we have to rise from *Tamas* to *Rajas*, and from *Rajas* to *Sattva*, though this is not a mathematical movement or a travel along a beaten track. There is a commingling of qualities and we are not always, entirely, in one state alone. We are not hundred percent *Tāmasika*, hundred percent *Rājasika*, or hundred percent Sāttvika, —all these things are present in us always. Yet there is a tentative need to apply ourselves for the purpose of a routine of practice which takes the shape of self-transcendence from *Tamas* to Rajas, and from *Rajas* to *Sattva*. Those who are *Tāmasika* preponderatingly are lethargic, stupid, idiotic, incapable of thinking properly and sleepy, gluttonous, etc. Those who are *Rājasika* are restless, passionate, full of desires, run about here and there, never finding peace in themselves, and not having a moment of rest. Those who are *Sāttvika* are the people of knowledge, sedate in behaviour, calm and judicious in judgment, and these are the aspirants who are religious and spiritual. People who pass away from this world at the time of the preponderance of one quality or other have a corresponding experience after death. Those who die when the quality of *Sattva* preponderates go to the higher regions, the realm of angels, paradise, *Svarga-loka*, as we call it. Those who are *Rājasika*, if they die in that condition, come back to the mortal world of restless activity. *Tamas* drags one down to the nether

regions, to the lower realm of suffering and unconsciousness. These *Gunas* are rotating and revolving perpetually like a wheel, and they never rest in themselves in a state of harmony at any time. The whole universe is constituted of these *Gunas*, the substance of *Prakriti*; inside and outside only these are present. These are the building bricks of the cosmos. And one who is able to visualise, unattached, the presence of these characters of *Prakriti*, who cognises the fact that the whole world is a drama played by these properties, who remains as a witness of this entire play enacted in the arena of experience by the *Gunas*,—such a person who stands above them, unaffected, who has transcended the *Gunas*, who has gone above the operations of *Prakriti*, is the one that is fit to enter into the bosom of Brahman, the Absolute.



XVI

THE SUPREME PERSON

The Fifteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā is a very important one in its own way. It commences with a description of the universe comparing it to a vastly spread-out tree sprouting forth from the root, which is Brahman. Curiously enough, the analogy of the tree is brought out in a way which is novel, unique and highly instructive. To give us an idea of the transcendence of the Supreme Creative Principle, ranging beyond all perceptible phenomena, the Gītā compares this root to something that is beyond and above, from which emanates the tree of the universe spreading its branches downwards in the form of the varieties of objects perceived by the senses and cognised by the mind, and the experiences everyone undergoes in life. Even as the whole tree is contained in the seed, the entire universe is in the Absolute in an undifferentiated manner, originally. The roots of the universe are above and the branches are below. In this respect this tree is different in its manifestation from the trees that we see here on earth, who have their roots below and the branches shooting forth above towards the sun and the sky. We always look up, above, into the skies, when we think of God, or offer our prayers to the Almighty. This is a senti-

ment of every individual mind. We look outward, we look inward and we look above. These are the ways in which we can cast our outlook in the envisagement of values. When everything appears mysterious and confounding, we look up in awe and consternation, expressing our inability to grasp the mystery, or the secret of things. All this universe, whatever be the variety contained in it, is an offshoot of the One, Indivisible Presence, the Supreme Brahman. Everything that we see or sense in any manner has proceeded from that one root. Even as the various branches, the twigs, the leaves and the flowers and the fruits of a tree can be said to be present hiddenly in a minute and invisible form in the seed, the universe, whatever be its variety and extent, has to be there in Brahman, because it cannot come from anywhere else. To us, who are parts of this manifestation, who are perching like birds on this tree of the cosmos, everything looks mysterious.

This comparison of the universe to a tree is not an innovation of the Bhagavadgītā by itself. This image occurs also in the Kathopanishad, where almost the same words are used for the description of the tree of the universe. And even in the Veda, as far as the Rigveda itself, some sort of reference can be found to this tree of the cosmos. We are told that there are two birds living in a single tree. Though in the Gītā no mention is made of the birds living in the tree, there is a description of this tree standing for this wide-spread manifestation

before us. The universe is a multitudinous variety scattered into particulars appearing to be different from one another in every way, and yet connected and related together by the organic grasp of the Supreme Presence of the seed of this tree. While in the seeds that we see in this world we cannot locate the pervasive character of the seed through the branches, etc., notwithstanding the fact that we have to infer this essence in every part of the tree, we see only the tree and not the seed; likewise, we see only the universe and not the root of it. Yet, this original seed is omnipresently pervading every bit of this tree, and the manifestations or the varieties are the ramifications of the essence of this root, this seed, Brahman, the Absolute. But to us, it is all a mystery. We do not know where it begins and where it ends. We cannot know the origin of it, we cannot know the culmination of it, and we cannot know the middle of it. Infinite is this universe, and the infinite universe emanates from the infinite Brahman. And infinite are also the varieties it manifests before us, and infinite is even the mystery that is hidden in the way in which it expresses itself. The whole process of creation is a marvel and is not capable of being understood by any individual, at any time. Not one can say that he can comprehend the mystery of the cosmos. All knowledge, all activity, everything objective, is within this tree of the universe, and whatever we are and whatever we know is phenomenal, relative and is conditioned by the growth of this tree. Hence we are not in a position to grasp its super-phenomenal Source, the Creator.

Referring to the image of the birds, I mentioned a description that occurs in the Veda and in the Upanishad. The birds that are supposed to be living on the branches of this tree are God and the individual. These birds are of different categories, altogether. Generally the birds sitting on the tree are eager to eat the fruit of the tree. We have seen parrots jumping from one branch to another in a tree in search of fruits which they want to eat with avidity. There are two birds living in a nest, in the same tree, and one of the birds is busy eating the fruits of this tree of the universe. So much busy is it that it cannot even be conscious of anything else, it is not even aware that there is another friend sitting near. When we are treated to a delicacy in a gorgeous meal or a feast, we are likely to forget even the next person near us because the concentration is wholly on the food that we eat. Such is the attraction that the senses have for their objects. So, the bird of the individual is wholly engrossed in the enjoyment of the sweet fruits of life, is unconscious totally of the other bird which simply gazes on at everything without involving itself in any form, sweet or otherwise. These two birds, God and the individual, are in the same place. And this tree can be the cosmos; it can be this body; it can be the society of people; it can be even an atom. Every little thing in the universe has the characteristic of everything else. So, God and the individual as essentially different principles are present in every speck of space and every item of the universe. The bondage of the individual is in the

engrossment of it in the eating of the fruit of life and the liberation of the individual is in its becoming conscious of the other bird that is sitting near it,—God. The one that merely gazes on without enjoying anything but is present immanently in all things is the liberated spirit. The other one is the bound soul. Both these are in this body. God is within us, and we are also here. The two are present everywhere in the whole creation. The eating of this forbidden fruit is the entanglement of the individual. And as long as the tree is visible, the fruits are also there, and the desire for the fruits cannot be avoided wholly.

The Bhagavadgītā admonishes us that this tree has to be felled down by cutting it at its root with the axe of non-attachment. The tree grows by attachment and it withers away by detachment. The universe is a bundle of egoisms, centres of self-affirmation, which well up into avid activity and strength by the fulfilment of desire through the indulgence thereof. And when desire dries up, the universe also is parched out, and it cannot exist any more, even as when the threads of the cloth are pulled out the cloth also ceases to be. The universe, ultimately, is not made up of substances but desires. The warp and woof of this universe are the desires of the individuals that constitute it. In a way we may say that the universe does not stand outside the individuals even as the cloth does not stand outside the threads of which it is constituted or formed. So, to cut at the root of the universe is

not an easy task, it requires a great understanding of the structure of the universe. It would mean that to cut at the root of phenomena would be to cut at our own roots, to fell the tree of ego, and nothing can be a harder job than to deal with one's own self. We cannot tackle our own selves because we are not any more an object to ourselves. We are accustomed to deal with things and objects but we do not regard ourselves as objects or things, and therefore we are incapable of handling or dealing in any way. We remain a hard-boiled indescribable something, and the source of our sorrows are our own selves. Nobody causes grief to us. We tie ourselves up like silk-worms in a cocoon by our own desires which wind themselves around the centre which is the ego. And, unless there is the wisdom of the creative God surging forth in our souls, this detachment is impossible. *Viveka*, or discrimination, is a precedent requisite for *Vairagya*, or non-attachment. One cannot detach oneself from anything unless there is an understanding of the nature of the relationship of that thing with oneself. Both attachment and detachment are difficult things to understand, because the relationship between the two terms of experience is also difficult to decipher. One clings to an object or is averse towards something on account of a lack of understanding of the mutual relationship between the two attitudes. When knowledge dawns, there is a spontaneous dropping out of all relationship. And the highest form of detachment is not a sundering of oneself from anything existent but the raising of oneself to a

consciousness of the pervasive character of the Reality that exists equally in the subject and the object, as well as in between the two. The great non-attachment which the Bhagavadgītā speaks of as '*Anāsakti*' is not an ordinary austere attitude of the individual, but a flowering of wisdom in the form of the recognition of the omnipresence of the Supreme Creator, which is at once a death-blow dealt at all desires, whereby further effort in that direction is not called for, even as, when we wake up from dream into a consciousness of the world outside us, our so-called anguishes and desires of the dream-world vanish of their own accord without any need on our part to exert in the direction of removing them. We have not to struggle to get over the problems of our dream-world when we wake up into the reality of this world because we have a higher knowledge when we have woken up from the dream. And, the very knowledge itself is the panacea for the evils of dream-experience, and there is no need for any extraneous effort on our part to get over the difficulties of the dream-world. The desires and aversions of dream melt away in the knowledge of waking, and so do the problems of life melt away in the presence of God; and what detachment can be greater than this experience? Here is an automatic rising of the soul to an awareness where desires have no significance whatsoever. The Bhagavadgītā, when it speaks of the need to employ the axe of detachment for felling the tree of bondage, actually refers to the knowledge of God, attaining which, experiencing which, there is no return to mortal existence.

Supreme is that Abode where the sun shines not, nor the moon, nor the stars, nor anything that we call light here. The supernal divine effulgence overshadows the brightest of lights that we can think of in this world. Reaching it, we do not come back. We shall not have any more rebirth, or transmigratory life. We shall not reap the fruit of sorrow any more; we shall be pervasive realities. We shall be immortalised for ever and ever. We shall not return to this world. Once we have woken up from dream, we have not to return to the dream-world for any purpose or engagement, and we do not have a desire to go back to dream to finish some work or task which had been left unfulfilled there, all our pleasures, all our engagements, even our debts in the dream-world are paid at once merely by the fact of waking and we have not got to pay our creditor from whom we have borrowed in the dream-world. The payment is the knowledge, and knowledge is the payment of all dues. So, too, the question of returning to the world does not arise, once we attain the Absolute. We have not got to come back to this world even as a waking person has no need to go back to the dream-world. Such is the glory and the magnificence and the majesty of the Almighty. This is the implication of the stimulating words that we read at the commencement of the Fifteenth Chapter.

The Supreme God-head is *Purușhottama*, in the language of the Bhagavadgītā. The *Purușha* is consciousness, the principle with which we are

acquainted in terms of the Sāmkhya philosophy, the seeing and knowing subject that is apparently counterposed with *Prakriti*, or the world of matter. There are two realities, or two principles, normally considered by us as existing by themselves, the *Purușha* and the *Prakriti*, Knower and the Known, consciousness and matter, the observer and the whole universe outside, called respectively here as the *Akșhara* or the imperishable, and the *Kșhara* or the perishable. But, transcending both, and comprehending both, absorbing both in itself, is the *Purușhottama*, the Supreme *Purușha*, above the *Purușhas* or empirical consciousnesses that are visible here as the isolated individuals in the form of yourself, myself and everybody. All this universe is pervaded by the *Purușhottama*. There is finally, only one *Purușha* in the whole universe, whose heads are all the heads, whose eyes are all the eyes, and whose ears are all the ears. Everyone's head is his head, all thoughts are his thoughts, all deeds are his deeds. No one does anything other than he, and no one can think, or even exist, except this marvellous Being. "Whatever was, whatever is, and whatever shall be, whatever can be anywhere under any circumstance is the *Purușha* alone", is the ancient and eternal proclamation of the Seer of the Veda. Into it all other *Purușhas* melt as rivers join the ocean, and there is neither the individual nor the world of matter, neither the subject nor the object in that All-Being. There is the one indivisible, oceanic experience of all-comprehensive existence. One who knows this

Purushottama is liberated at once. And knowledge is the same as liberation.

It is difficult to know what kind of knowledge it is that we are referring to here. When we speak of knowledge, generally, we are likely to identify it with learning, with the sciences and the arts of the world, with literature, with music, with mathematics, with physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy. These are the types of knowledge we are acquainted with in this world. But these are only names given to mysterious realities that are hidden behind these forms of learning. All learning is only an acquaintance that we try to develop with the forms outside. The things, as they are in themselves, are outside our comprehension, and therefore, our knowledge is a shell rather than a fact. We catch the husk and call it the wisdom of the world. We have only a phenomenal contact with the outer forms of 'something' which seems to be there, but of which we have no correct grasp, and into which we cannot enter in reality. Even the formal knowledge we have of the things of the world is not a reliable knowledge. Firstly, we do not have the knowledge of the thing-in-itself. We have only an acquaintance with the form, the name and the complex, or the bundle of relationships of which the external features of an object are composed. But even this acquaintance is, in the end, fallible, because it is conditioned by the structural patterns of our sense-organs, the mind and the intellect, and so even this formal knowledge is inadequate. Thus,

we can be safely said to have no knowledge at all of anything worth the while. We grope in darkness, in utter ignorance, imagining that we are wordly-wise, but knowing nothing at all. And this is not the knowledge we are speaking of when it is said that knowledge is liberation or freedom of the spirit. Knowledge is the same as the knowledge of God. Knowledge is *being, as such.* It is the entry of our true nature into the being of all things. There is the union of the seer and the seen in such a manner that the being of the seer is the same as the being of the seen, and *vice versa.* God enters us, and we enter God, as the rivers enter the ocean, and the ocean embraces rivers, so that one cannot know which is the river and which is the ocean. Such is the destination of the soul when it reaches the *Puruṣhottama*, the Supreme Person above all personalities and forms. Knowing this, one is liberated forever. There is no chance, or trace, of bondage any more.



XVII

THE PLAY OF THE COSMIC POWERS

As the teachings of the Bhagavadgītā proceed on, they begin to unravel different types of mysteries. We have studied the Third Chapter, where reference was made to the *Gunas* of *Prakriti*, and we were told that there are three properties, —*Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. And we shall be told further that the universe can be boiled down to a still fewer number of powers or forces. The philosophical processes of what we know as the thesis and the antithesis, the position and the opposition of a thing, are the only things we see anywhere. These two aspects of a single force appearing as conflicting parties are known as the '*Daiva*' and the '*Āsura*' powers in the cosmos, one moving towards the Centre and the other urging externally towards the periphery of names and forms;—the centripetal and the centrifugal powers. There are two impulses within us,— to go in, and to out. We have a desire to enter into the centre of all things and grasp the best of things in the world, the essence of everything. That is why we have a curiosity to know all things, an unquenchable thirst and longing for more and more, endlessly. Our love for knowledge is infinite, it never

gets satiated. We wish to go deeper and deeper into the mystery of all things, and freedom is what we ask for, finally. We seek freedom, and nothing else. But we work for bondage vigorously, at the same time, because the other urge also is there working with equal power, in the other direction. We are like a person whose legs are pulled both ways. It is difficult to say which is more powerful, for we are caught between the devil and the deep sea. There is a perpetual battle going on, a war that is being waged everywhere between these two powers, the *Daiva* and the *Āsura*, the divine and the undivine, as they are usually known. The universal power of Self-integration driving the soul towards the Absolute; and the psychic, the intellectual, the rational and sensory powers urging themselves forward outwardly towards the objects of perception and indulgence;—this is the Mahābhārata, this is the Rāmāyana, this is the conflict, this is the friction, this is the skirmish, this is the little fight that we see in the shops and in the streets and in the houses and everywhere. These are the propellers of the wars and crusades of history, these the stupendous meanings behind evolution as a whole. The powers struggle one against the other, and the history of the cosmos is the witness to the success or failure of either of these forces. The Bhagavadgītā tells us that it is our duty to work in co-operation with the universal power of integration,—the *Daiva*, and not the *Āsura*. The *Āsura*, or the devilish, the demoniacal power, is that which pulls us out of ourselves, drives us away from the Self,

takes us away from our own Centre, makes the Self the non-self, and converts us into objects while we are the Subject in ourselves. This is the dark power that works in a mysterious manner, moving earth and heaven, to transform everything into an object rather than the subject with a status of its own. The soul within is the representative of the Universal in us. And everything else that is in the form of a vesture covering the soul is a representative of the phenomenal complex of names and forms. We should not under-rate the powers of the cosmos with the impression that we are souls, because the cosmos derives its energy from the Universal itself. Just as a mirror which does not shine by itself can draw sustenance from the light of the Sun and appear as if it is also brilliant, so do our senses deceive us, distract us and tantalise us, by appearing to offer us a satisfaction which they really cannot give. Here, in this awful struggle between these two forces, we are caught in the middle, and it is difficult with the strength of our arms and feet to get over this mire of being pulled equally in two different directions; it is necessary to have the blessings of the *Guru*. In one place, the Gītā itself tells us that the only alternative available for a seeker is to approach a competant guide on this path, and by questioning and self-surrender and service and intimate communion with him, attain wisdom. The Grace of God simultaneously works in the case of every seeking spirit which ardently longs for this enlightenment.

Reference was made to the three *Gunas* of *Prakriti*, in the Third Chapter of the Gītā, and these *Gunas*, or properties, are mentioned frequently in the course of the teaching. By the time we reach the Sixteenth Chapter, we come to a novel revelation that the whole universe is a play of two forces, —the ingoing and the outgoing, powers that urge themselves forward in the direction of the Centre of cosmos and those that rush outwardly in the direction of space, time and objectivity. The traditional names given to these forces of inward and outward movement, *Daiva* and Āsura, allow themselves to be translated as the divine and the undivine, the godly and the demoniacal impulses. Now, the terms good and evil, divine and undivine are normally associated with ethical values and the moral assessments in life. But the Gītā here rises above the ordinary human concepts of good and evil, or even ethics and morality, and takes its stand on a highly philosophical or metaphysical ground, so that what we call good and evil or right and wrong, etc. become the human readings of meaning into the great drama enacted in the whole cosmos by these impersonal powers which alternately move inward and outward and compel everything, everywhere, to work according to their intentions, as if everything is a puppet in their hands. Everyone and everything has, thus, a twofold urge within itself. Often, we are inspired and roused into a feeling of self-transcendence, a movement towards a comprehensive grasp and a total experience, by an entry into the centre of things.

At other times we are also impelled by the other urge, the desire which speaks to us in the language of sense-objects, fulfilment or indulgence of passions, working through the sense-organs rather than the power of intuition, running away from the essence to the forms outside, so that the more we move externally the greater is our involvement in names and forms; and the farther we are from the centre of the universe, the greater also is the sorrow that follows as a consequence. The more we move away from the centre, the more are we heading towards what we call hell, in the language of the religions; and the heavenly regions are those stages of experience which tend towards the Centre rather than the circumference and the space-time objectivitiy. These forces work perpetually, without a beginning and an end, and they work everywhere, so that nothing is free from their operations. The evolution and the involution of the universe are the working of these two urges, and no one can humanly understand as to how and why they are operating in this manner. It is a mystery transcending human comprehension, because human beings are already involved in the working of these forces, and how can they understand their intentions ? They range above the human intellect and the capacity of the individual in any manner. But, the Bhagavadgītā emphasises that it is the duty of every one to get out of the clutches of these outward-going urges which lodge the consciousness in name and form, and to endeavour to the best of one's capacity to move towards the Centre which is one's essentiality,

rather than the name and the form. The more we go towards the Centre,—and this Centre is everywhere, —the less is the involvement of consciousness in the name-form-complex, so that, in the ultimate reality of the universe there is no name and form.

Now, this so-called Centre of the universe is not a point as the centre of a circle in geometry. These are only words we use for the purpose of human understanding, because our language is limited, words are feeble, they cannot convey the inner significance of these diviner messages. Great mystics run into raptures and go beyond the significance of ordinary language when they say, for instance, that this Centre is everywhere with its circumference nowhere. When it is said that we have to move towards the Centre of the universe, it means we have to move to That which is everywhere, a thing which is enough to make us go crazy, because, what on earth does one mean by saying that the Centre is everywhere? How could a centre be everywhere ? It is an absurd statement for all practical purposes. But here is a deep secret which is beyond human grasp and capable of appreciation with a little exertion on the part of our endowments. To move towards the Centre which is everywhere is to merge oneself in all things, to get united with the whole of creation. By the Centre, here, we mean the Self, the Rootedness of all things in the All. The quintessential essence is the Centre. Do not we all regard ourselves as the centre of evaluations in life ? Do not

we consider, somehow, overtly or covertly, that the whole world is an accessory to our own self? Though we are afraid to speak in this manner, lest it should be interpreted as a gospel of utter selfishness, this so-called selfish, distorted interpretation of our own self as the centre of all things is a reflection of a greater meaning which is hidden in ourselves *viz.*, the universality of these particular centres we call the selves. This little self of ours, which arrogantly asserts itself as the all-in-all in this world, is an upstart child of a larger significance which it carries within its own bosom, but which it cannot understand. It is like an ass carrying a treasure on its back, not knowing its worth! Our individual self is like a donkey, but it carries a tremendously weighty wealth of universal meaning and connotation, so that, even on the back of this donkey, we will find something important, and perhaps all that is important. And here, in our own little self, we have the secret of the cosmos; the key to unlock the mysteries of the universe lies within our own selves, within our own hearts, notwithstanding the fact we are behaving like fools and wrongly consider our own psycho-physical individuality as the centre of all interpretation and evaluation. So there is the devil and the divine essence working together within our own being.

The two urges are working together, one competing with the other, and the practice of Yoga is not, therefore, a simple affair. It is hard, because we have to move in the midst of two

opposing currents of power, and with whatever understanding we have, it is necessary for us to free ourselves from involvement in the outward-going impulses. The effort of consciousness to move in harmony with the inward-going urges, tending towards the Centre which is everywhere, which is what we call God, the Absolute, is Yoga proper. In a traditional and epic manner, the Sixteenth Chapter of the Gītā speaks of these two powers, the demoniacal and the divine, with this philosophical and spiritual background of its message. It is, ordinarily, not easy to go with the current of the inward-moving powers. We are, for all practical purposes, phenomenal individuals, with a little touch of the noumenal reality in us. It may be that everyone in the world is not in the same stage of evolution, and each one of us is a judge for one's own self in discovering as to where we stand in the process of evolution. Our own heart is our judge, and no one else can judge us.

The difficulty in the understanding of the nature of the stage in which one is placed at any given moment of time is great indeed, and towards the end of the Chapter, the great Teacher tells us that our guide on this path is the scripture, revelation, the intuition of the great sages. It is not easy for us to understand what is the means of right knowledge. Philosophers have been struggling since ages to discover the means of knowledge or a proper understanding of things as they are in themselves. Is it sensory perception? Is it logical

deduction, inference? Is it comparison of one thing with another thing? Is it apprehension? Or is it scriptural testimony? What is the way of knowledge? Religions have held that the authority is scripture and no other thing can be ultimately reliable. By scripture what is meant is not merely a printed book, but the weight which revelation has. Again, by revelation we mean an intuitional flash whereby the whole truth is revealed to a faculty which rises as the total substance of our personality. One cannot easily reject the authority of the scriptures, for reason is often unbridled and can be susceptible to prejudice.

But a doubt arises in the mind of Arjuna. "Well, Sir, it is true that revelation is the supreme authority. But is there any value in faith by which the heart longs for a certain value or a meaning, though it is not based on any kind of scriptural revelation? It appears from what we gather in the Seventeenth Chapter that, that mysterious thing we call faith has a great part to play in our walks of life. We do not always refer to scriptures when we work in the world. We are people belonging to various professions and vocations, having many types of duty to perform, and when we choose the kind of duty that we have to execute in life, or do anything for the matter of that, we do not go to the 'Sermon on the Mount', the 'Upaniṣhads' or the 'Bhagavadgītā' for consultation, though these are great authorities, indeed. We have something in us which seems to guide us independent of any

scripture. That is the faith that we have in our own selves, a confidence that we entertain in our own capacities, the conscience as it is usually called. Yes, Krishna tells that faith is a great criterion and standard of judgment indeed, but there are faiths and faiths. All created beings have some sort of an instinct and they have their own methods of evaluation of things. There is a sub-human level, there is a human understanding, and there is a super-human faculty of knowing. So, when we speak of faith, we do not refer merely to any sudden impulse which rises on the spur of a moment, but a considered judgment which springs from the whole nature of our being. Our nature decides the kind of faith that we entertain in our life. And natures, again, are classified as threefold,—*Sāttvika*. *Rājasika* and *Tāmasika*. Everyone of us has some kind of confidence, faith and understanding and feeling. Everybody believes in something. But that belief varies in quality, character and intensity in accordance with the root from which it arises:—*Sattva*, or *Rajas*, or *Tamas*. The world of the tiger is different from the world of a human being. The instinct which impels the beast in the jungle is qualitatively different from the judgment that operates in a sage. The *Gunas* of *Prakriti* operate in different intensities, in different levels of evolution. The law of the jungle operates according to one level in which the *Gunas* manifest themselves, and the law of human society works in another level. The law that reigns in the world of angels is based on a different standard altogether,

which rises from a still higher stage of the evolution of the Gunas. *Tamas* is the lowest level, and *Rajas* is higher, but *Sattva* is the highest. The reason why we regard these three *Gunas* as higher and lower is due to the amount of reality which they express through their media. In *Tamas*. reality is not expressed in its essentiality, in *Rajas* it is expressed, no doubt, but in a distracted and distorted form, whereas in *Sattva* there is perspicuity of the expression of reality. When sun-light falls on dark pitch, we know what sort of expression of the light can be there. And the very same light can be reflected through turbid water shaking in its contents. This light can be expressed through a clean glass or crystal-clear water. And one can see the difference. So is the way in which reality is expressed through the '*Gunas*' of *Prakriti*. In *Sattva*, which is perfect equilibrium and freedom from distraction, there is no direct contact with reality, of course; yet there is a complete reflection thereby, even as clean glass may permit the entry of sun-light entirely, though the glass acts as an obstacle, an obstruction standing between the perceiver and the perceived. But in shaky water which is also muddy, the reflection is inadequate, we do not see things properly. And in opaque objects no reflection is possible. T*amas* is an inert something which completely screens off all experience of Truth. In *Rajas* there is some sort of an entry of reality into experience, but it is no good for practical purposes. It is only *Sattva* that permits a clear picture of things.

So, in our faiths, in our beliefs, we are either *Tāmasika*, or *Rājasika* or *Sāttvika*. We may have the faith of an animal or the faith of a highly prejudiced person, or the faith of one who is enlightened and has a direct grasp of truth by an intuition of the nature of things. This belief, this faith, decides practically everything we do in this world,—our political life, our social relationships, our personal conduct, our religious practices, even our idea of God and the aim of life;—all these are determined by the kind of *Guna* that operates in us, in any measure. If we are *Tāmasika*, lowest in the rung of evolution, we have the world-view of an animal, which, too, has a philosophy of its own, according to which it works. We can think like insects, reptiles, lions and tigers. or we can think of the world from a point of view which today we sometimes call humanitarian, or we can think in a divine way which surpasses all human judgments. It is this background upon which the Seventeenth Chapter is based, which describes three types of faith that propel the conduct and the activity of people in the world. The food that we eat, the way in which we speak, the kind of relationship that we maintain with others, the religious practices in which we engage ourselves, are all rooted in and defined by the belief or faith that we entertain as a philosophy of our lives. Suffice it to say that it is upto us to move from *Tamas* to *Rajas*, and *from Rajas* to *Sattva*, and put forth effort to transform ourselves into diviner beings rising above even the human-level of understanding, which, again, is

superior to the animal life. Each one is a judge for one's own self. We know where we stand, with some exercise of good reason. By a measure of sensible impersonality and discriminative effort, we will be able to decide the stage in which we are. Any kind of retributive or animalistic behaviour where values are wrested out of things and centered in one's own self, where people and objects of the world are treated as nothings in comparison with one's self, where we become the sole standard of judgment and everyone else a tool to ourselves, where such is the outlook of our life, we can imagine that *Tamas* is predominant in us. When we want to exploit the world for the satisfaction of our own so-called outlook of life, we are in *Tamas*. When we give equal value to others as we give toourselves, we are on a higher level of human appreciation. We do not feel it proper for us, then, to transform everything into an instrument for our satisfaction. We become humanistic, charitable, sociable, polite and good-natured. But when we rise higher still to the diviner level where *Sattva* predominates, we do not regard others as 'others' at all. They are not others, they are just one being appearing in this multifaceted form of ourselves and others; for in the divine level there are no 'objects'. There are only subjects appearing in all forms. In the animal-level it is purely the objectivity of things that is taken into consideration. In the human level the subject and the object are taken on a par, as on an equal footing. In the divine level the distinction between the subject and

the object is transcended, and everyone reflects everyone else. This is the spiritual realm of Truth, the golden age, or the millennium that people speak of and hope to see with their eyes. When *Dharma* prevails and reigns supreme in the world, where governments are not necessary, when there is no necessity for external mandate or compulsive rule, when everyone reflects truth wholly in oneself, when everyone reflects everyone else as if mirrors are placed one in front of the other,—such is the divine realm of *Brahma-loka*, the Kingdom of God, which is within everyone. This is the world of *Sattva*, utter purity.

Towards the end of the Seventeeth Chapter we are given the cryptic message of "*Om-Tat-Sat*", a term with which we are all familiar, but the meaning of which is not always so clear. It is said that this a very holy expression and it has to be employed in every religious performance. We conclude all pious acts with the utterance, *Om-Tat-Sat*, which appears to be an invocation of God at the end of a performance. The meaning of these words is not clear, and no commentary on the Gītā will perhaps be an aid to us in understanding what these three terms actually signify. We merely say, *Om-Tat-Sat*. We do not know what it means. Well, we may go a little deep into its significance from the point of view of the Bhagavadgītā itself, in the light of the great message that has been given to us through its various Chapters. And in this light if we look at these terms, it would appear that

the three seeds, *Om*, *Tat* and *Sat* signify the total comprehensiveness of the nature of Brahman ranging beyond the concepts of Reality in the form of transcendence and immanence. Generally, a remote thing is referred to as *Tat*, in the Sanskrit language. 'That' is *Tat*. We refer to God as *Tat*, *It*, etc. as a super-transcendent inaccessible something. *Sat* is the very same transcendent Reality hiddenly present as the Divine immanence in all things. God is transcendent and also immanent. He is above us; he is also within us. He is far, and he is near; he is outside, and he is inside. Now, these ideas of transcendence and immanence,—*Tat-Sat*, —the notions of God being outside as well as inside, are also to be transcended in a larger grasp, which is *Om*. Here, in this mystical significance of the well-known symbol of *Om*, we are given a transcendence of both the transcendent aspect and the immanent aspect of the Absolute. It is, in the language of the Upaniṣhad, the *Bhūma* or the Plenum, the completeness whereby we cannot look upon it either as something above us or as something within us. To that supreme completeness, there are no outward and inward differences. There is no such thing as going above and being within, because it is everywhere, at all times, without the limitations of space, time and objectivity. Such an incomprehensible significance is embedded in this mystical formula of *Om*. Naturally, it is a holy expression, which is unutterable, beyond understanding but signifying everything that is blessed andsupreme. Such is *Om*, which grasps within itself

all that is real everywhere, the transcendent and the immanent. So, God is all, the Absolute is everything. The invocation of this Symbol in our own experience, in our own consciousness, a rememberance of it at the sacred conclusion of any kind of performance, religious or otherwise, is regarded as a completion of that performance. God completes everything, and everything is incomplete where God is absent. The only thing that is full is God. And so he has to be invoked always.



XVIII

THE YOGA OF THE LIBERATION OF SPIRIT

The concluding Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, which is the Eighteenth, is a sort of sequel to the whole of the message which has been delivered in the earlier sections. By way of a summing up of the teaching, the essentials are precisely stated in a classified manner. After everything has been said, it appears that the point which the Gītā is driving home into our minds is that we should not shirk duty. This seems to be the ringing tone of its message. And in the context of the description of the nature of duty, several other philosophical and ethical aspects also are touched upon incidentally. The outlook of the Gītā is wholly realistic. And inasmuch as the realism of life is rooted in a grand idealism of aspiration, the gospel becomes most comprehensive in its approach. When we touch one point, we begin to realise that it is connected with another, and the second one with the third, and so on, until the revelation comes that nothing can be explained unless everything is explained. Such is the organic structure of the gospel of the Bhagavadgītā. So, from this point of view, the Eighteenth Chapter starts by recounting

the principle of action, *Karma-Yoga*, which is many a time regarded as the establishment in a kind of knowledge free from action, and at other times as the performance of action free from clinging to the fruits thereof. Two significant terms are used at the very outset,—*Samnyāsa* and *Tyāga*. Though etymologically the two words mean almost one and the same thing, they are used here with a special meaning attached to each one of them. When all desireful actions are abandoned and we perform only actions free from desire, we are supposed to be in the state of *Samnyāsa*, a relinquishment of everything that is associated with personal motive or desire. But *Tyāga*, which is also abandonment, is defined as the giving up of the desire for the fruit of the action and not the giving up of action itself. There is, thus, a difference between the giving up or relinquishment of action and the giving up of the consequence of the action. These are not easy things to understand, though it would appear that we have studied a lot on the subject throughout the course of the teaching. It would be hard for us to make out what action is, situated as we are in a human complex working through the medium of social relationships and entertaining an outlook which is secretly motivated by some form of desire. We cannot imagine a state of affairs where we can be entirely free from all desires, whatever be the gospel, whatever be the teaching. This is a great handicap before us. And so it requires a Herculian effort on our part to rise to that level of understanding where it would be

possible for us to live without motivated outlooks or desires which are directed to particular ends. It is not possible for anyone to live without doing some kind of action. This is one of the great points made out in the Bhagavadgītā. It is futile on the part of anyone, whatever be his knowledge or wisdom, to imagine that he can be without any activity, because the world is nothing but action, it is a field of movement, enterprise and effort. It is *Kurukshetra*, an arena of activity; but it is also *Dharmakshetra*, a field of action regulated by law, and not merely of some promiscuous or chaotic activity. Here is the problem before us; neither can we be free from action, nor can we perform action with any motive behind it. If this could enter our heads in its true significance, we would have understood the message of the Gītā. As this is a difficult point to grasp, it is further explained in some detail for the purpose of the elucidation of its meaning.

There are certain actions which are unavoidable. Among the many types of action, three specific ones are pin-pointed as inviolable and impossible of avoiding under any circumstance. These three types are designated as *Yajña*, *Dāna* and *Tapas*, terms which have a wealth of meaning behind them. Literally translated, *Yajña* would mean sacrifice, *Dāna* would mean charity, and *Tapas* would mean austerity. These are not injunctions of a religious type that are imposed upon us by the Gītā. This is not a ritual that we are expected to perform by way of *Yajña*, *Dāna*, or

Tapas. These are tremendously significant cosmic requirements on the part of every individual, whatever be his vocation. There is a universal meaning behind these great mandates. In our relationship to the Supreme Being, God, the Absolute, we have to be perpetually performing a sacrifice on our part by ascending degrees of perfection and in increasing dimensions. God is the greatest of sacrifices in the sense that it is the state of the abolition of all individuality and egoism. The state of God-Being is the apotheosis of sacrifice. Often, in Indian scriptures, God is referred to as *Yajña*, or sacrifice. '*Yajño vai vishnuh*'—'Nārāyana is *Yajña*, or sacrifice himself. By this what is intended is that even the least of individuality is wiped out in that conflagration of universal knowledge or realisation. So, to approach God would be to perform a sacrifice on the part of oneself, because the highest state of egolessness is God-Being. And to approximate this Great Being would be to sacrifice or surrender the ego, little by little, by degrees, which is the sacrifice that is intended. To surrender and sacrifice our own self is the principle of true abandonment or relinquishment,—*Samnyāsa*, or *Tyaga*. So, from the point of view of our aspirations for God, our duty would be sacrifice, surrender, relinquishment of personality and egoism, the principle of the 'I am' in us. We are bound to perform a duty in our relationship to God, and our duty towards God is sacrifice.

Likewise, we have a duty towards the world.

And that is charitableness, *Dāna*. We cannot be possessors, accumulators or hoarders of any kind of property when we live in a world of co-operative action and mutual respect. Respect for others' welfare and recognition of the value of another's existence is the principle of charity which does not merely mean parting with some material goods that we may possess, but an inward attitude of respect for others, inasmuch as the Self is present in others to the same extent as it is present in us. The feeling of love and affection, and a spontaneous sense of giving rather than taking is the essence of *Dāna*, or charity. We perform charity not because we are rich and others are poor. The reason is different, viz., that the others are equally important and they have as much right to exist as we ourselves have. The principle of the recognition of the Selfhood of all beings is behind the performance of charity or the extension of good-will with regard to others. This is our duty towards the world of beings, even as we have a duty towards God, the Supreme Creator. We have also a duty to our own self, in a similar manner. Self-control is one's own duty in respect of oneself. Austerity, *Tapas*, is our duty from our own point of view, the opposite of the indulgence of the senses. The pampering of the ego, the mind and the senses is deleterious to the health of the personality. The more are we self-controlled, the more are we able to restrain our senses, the mind and the intellect, the larger do we become in the content of our being. *Tapas* is a great duty of everyone in respect of oneself. Indulgence is the

violation of this duty. The more we restrain ourselves from indulgence or satisfaction of any kind, the richer we become in righteousness and virtue. The more we begin to satisfy the ego and indulge in the demands of the senses, the farther we are from righteousness. So, austerity, self-control, restraint of the senses, mind and the intellect, is our duty in regard to our own self. Charity is our duty in regard to the world outside. Sacrifice is our duty towards God. These three duties are incapable of abandonment under any circumstance

Now, when we speak of duty, naturally, we are reminded of activity of some kind. Duty is 'to do' something, in some way, in respect of something; and doing is action. The moment we think of action, we think of the actor or the agent, the performer of the action. Under ordinary circumstances, it is difficult to free ourselves from the idea of agency in an action. 'I do', is the inherent notion behind every individual, whether one performs a sacrifice, does a charity or is engaged in austerity. Whatever be the thing that we do, we cannot avoid the feeling that we are doing it. "I sacrifice, I do charity, and I perform austerities",—this is a mistake, again, and we are warned against this blunder. We are not the doers of anything, because the so-called 'I' or 'we' is an illusion, finally; it does not exist at all, on account of the ultimate Reality which reigns above all things, eternally transcending and including all particular agents. Every event is the cumulative effect of the collaboration

of many factors, and it is not caused by any particular individual. Why go so far? Look at this little phenomenon of digesting the food that we take everyday. Look at the co-operation of the limbs and organs of the body, the various physiological functions involved in the digesting of the meal that we eat. Any good physiologist will know how the whole body functions in a systematic manner. Every cell is active. There is no part of the organism which is inactive while there is the process going on of the digesting of the food. We cannot say that the food is digested by the stomach only. It is not true. The heart and lungs, the blood stream, even the brain and the other organs that go to constitute this body have an important role to play in this performance of the common action known as the digestion of food. Every action is a total action and a co-operative action. There is no such thing as individual action even in this body of ours. This is only to give an example of how things work anywhere in this world. Even as there is no such thing as isolated action in the physical organism, there is no such thing as isolated action in human society, in the international field, in the whole cosmos. Every event is a universal event, every situation is a cosmic situation. If anything happens anywhere, it happens everywhere, at the same time. We are not accustomed to think in this manner. We are poor weaklings in intellect as far as the truths of life are concerned. The prejudice of the ego has caught hold of us to such an extent that it prevents us from opening our eyes

to the facts of life. The Bhagavadgītā, in an important verse, says that many factors contribute to the causation of a particular event and the performance of any single action. The body, of course, is one of the instruments of action. The sense of individuality, or the principle of the "I" is also a contributory factor. The sense organs also contribute enough in the performance of an action. The intention behind any kind of enterprise is also an important contributory factor. We know very well how significant these aspects are. But, above all things, there is the final deciding factor, and that is the nature of creation itself, the structure of the cosmos, the Will of the Creator, the Plan of the Absolute, the Providence, as we may call it, which no human being can understand, and no one is given to understand. Such being the case, how blunderous would it be on the part of anyone to imagine that he is the sole doer of anything?

Krishna goes further in delineating these points a little more for a clarified understanding. There are varieties of knowledge, varieties of the application of the will, varieties in the function of the emotion, and varieties of methods of the performance of action. When we speak of knowledge, we are not always clear in our minds, usually, because knowledge, to mention the least, is at least of three kinds. The highest knowledge, the mediocre, and the lowest type, are distinguished. When one is able to recognise the presence of a single, uniform, common denominator behind every action,

every event and every form, or object, one is supposed to be endowed with the highest kind of knowledge. The recognition of a common principle in the midst of the varieties of sense-preception is the supreme form of knowledge. Though many things are seen by the senses, the internal faculty of wisdom would tell us that there is, behind these varieties, a uniform principle of reality. Ultimately, there is only one thing appearing as many things. When we are convinced of the fact that we are able to view things in this light, we are blessed with the loftiest form of wisdom. But when we are only academic persons, rationalists, working merely through the logical intellect, accepting that there is variety, while, at the same time, conceding that there is a relationship among things, so that there is a kind of relativity of all objects, one hanging on the other, we are in a state lower than the one already mentioned. In spite of the fact that we are recognising the inter-relationship of things, we are also accepting the varieties at the same time as valid in their own forms. This is the so-called philosophic, rational, academic, or scientific understanding of these days, good enough for all practical purposes, but not ultimately valid. But the lowest kind of knowledge is that whereby one clings to a particular object only, as if it is everything. We cling to money, we cling to status, we cling to name and fame and power of various types, attach ourselves vehemently to some point which we identify with the entirety of the values of life. A passionate clinging to any particular thing is the lowest type of

understanding. And most people in the world are of this type; very few can have that lofty elevation by which they can grasp the inter-relatedness of things in a cosmical sense, what to speak of the highest knowledge. People in the world are in the lowest category of understanding, because everyone clings to something only, and not to all things. Thus, here, we have a categorisation of the three types of appreciation, or knowledge.

So is the case with will, or volition. When our will-power is able to decide upon the supreme value of life and maintain this consciousness continuously, we are endowed with the most powerful form of will, the *Sāttvika* form of volition. *Moksha* is the goal of life, and everything is contributory towards this supreme attainment. If the will can rest on this conclusion perpetually, we may be said to be possessed of the highest form of will-power. We should be able to connect every little thing in the world with that ultimate purpose of the liberation of the soul. But if our will is muddled, is mixing up values, and we are unable to come to a decision as to what is the ultimate principle that guides life, go on quibbling about *Dharma*, not knowing what it is, do not know what is the final purpose of things, shift our points of decision from one to the other at different moments of time, —that indecisive will is *Rājasika* or distracted. The lowest kind of will is that which clings to wrong ways, lives in unrighteousness, is engaged in vicious activities, considering them as noble, worthwhile and meaningful.

Likewise, is emotion. The feeling of pleasure or satisfaction which impels all emotions is also of three kinds. The highest kind of the satisfaction of emotion is that which is permanent and abiding in the end, though requiring some painful effort in the beginning. Generally we seek pleasure at the very outset. We do not want to work hard, because work is pain, we hate effort of every kind, "Why should I do anything?" Because, to do anything is unpleasant to the ego. But we do not understand that all worthwhile things in life are preceded by some exertion. That which is painful in the beginning but pleasant in the end, perpetually,—that satisfaction or pleasure is *Sāttvika*. But that which is pleasant in the beginning and bitter in the end is *Rājasika*, and we would repent for having sought this kind of satisfaction. We jump into an immediate delight of the senses by contact with objects, but, then, reap sorrow as a consequence. This is not wisdom. The lowest kind of happiness is that which revels in the crudest indulgence of the senses, bereft of understanding and reason, making one wallow like an animal in rubbish, totally ignorant of the values of life, and drowned in *Tamas*, or inertia. As regards action, enough has already been said. That which is engendered with unselfishness and an impersonality of attitude, is *Sāttvika*. That which is motivated by desire is *Rājasika*. That which is done without any sense of proportion, and is bereft of the consideration of *pros.* and *cons.* is *Tāmasika*. These are the broad outlines which the Teacher of the Bhagavadgītā draws in the

Eighteenth Chapter for the purpose of clarifying certain concepts and teachings which were delivered earlier in the foregoing Chapters.

The Bhagavadgītā is not merely a metaphysical gospel. It is not just a philosophical discourse in the sense of an idealism lifted above the values of life. It has something to say about social existence and the values which are empirical and realistic. In a very few words the nature of co-operative social living is mentioned. With reference to what has been already said by way of the description of knowledge, will, emotion and action, we may say that our endowments are practically these four. And our social life is an outward expression, by way of mutual co-operation, of these faculties with which we live in this world. No one is endowed with all knowledge. No one has all power. No one is clarified entirely in emotion. No one knows the secret of all action. Hence there is a necessity to share what one has with others. In order that society may be a perfectly organised living body, even as there is a co-operative activity among the limbs of our own physiological system, it is necessary to apply this principle of co-operation to human society also, if it is to exist, and if it is to be in peace. Else, there would be dissension among the members forming society and mutual self-regard would be absent, which may culimnate even in battle and war, a scene which threatens people at a time when the welfare of another is completely blotted out from one's

vision, and each one is for oneself and the devil takes the hindmost. If this is to be the fate or the policy of life, what would happen to human society ? If each one dislikes the other, and everyone likes one's own self, there would be chaos and an impending destruction of life. But this should not be on the very face of things. In the light of the purpose of the universe, which is a gradual evolution into the realisation of the freedom of the Spirit, from this point of view at least, all stages of evolution are a gradual rise from an organic completeness of one type to another of a larger dimension and comprehension. War, battle, destruction, annihilation is not the purpose of Nature. Growth, evolution, constructive activity, and purposeful movement towards the ultimate realisation, is the aim of the universe. Hence we have to share knowledge, feeling, emotion and work among ourselves. These categorisations of social groups into classes are sometimes called castes in a wrongly intentioned manner. We have heard of the caste system which is cowed down by people as a curse upon humanity. Yes, anything can become a curse and a blot, a shame, if it is distorted and mis-construed and read in the wrong place. Even if we eat our meal at a wrong time, it can be a curse to the body, and anything can be evil if its meaning is not understood and is misconstrued, abused, or exploited in any manner. The classification of society into the groups of knowledge, etc., is for the constructive, co-operative, wholesome existence of society. These

are, in traditional terms, the classes of *Brāhmaṇa*, *Kṣhatriya*, *Vaiśya* and *Śūdra*, whose purports have been lost sight of these days, while the real intention here is super-individualistic and is meant for social welfare in the light of the true nature of things. They represent the blend of spiritual power, political power, economic power, and man-power, necessary for social solidarity and a wholesome existence.

The Great Teacher is winding up his message when he says that everything is controlled by God personally, as well as impersonally. The whole universe revolves round Him and there cannot be anything which is outside the purview of His knowledge. Our duty, therefore, is to surrender our individuality to That All-Being, we call the Almighty. Our blessedness lies here. The more do we assert ourselves, so much is the worse for us, and the more we are in a position to affirm the existence of the Almighty as the all-comprehensive Being, the less would we be there as significant entities. "Drown your mind in this thought, devote yourself to the fulfilment of this ideal, perform every action for the purpose of receiving this Divine Grace from God. Surrender yourself, and prostrate yourself before this Great Creator, you shall reach Him, the Supreme Being, there is no doubt about this. Whatever you think deeply in your mind, that you shall become ; whatever you feel in your heart, that is going to be your destination and goal ; whatever you shall ask, that

you shall be given. In this blazing fire of knowlege, all sins are burnt out at once, and there would be no such thing as sin, ultimately. Sin is an error of understanding ; it is not a thing that exists outside us like a terrifying devil. It is as darkness, it is not there substantially, it is just the absence of light. And, so, when the Sun of knowledge rises, this darkness shall automatically vanish ; you need not worry about it. When the self surrenders itself wholy to the Omnipresence of God-Being, there cannot be a trace of evil or sin any more ; there shall be the glow of enlightenment. It will be the possession of all existence at once, instantaneously, the possession of knowledge which amounts to an experience of delight, the ambrosia of immortality. You become possessed of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss at one stroke, in its infinitude and eternality".

Again, to reiterate, the Bhagavadgītā is cautious of the values of the various degrees or levels of self-advancement in the process of evolution. We have to emphasise again, tirelessly, that no stage in life is so unimportant as to be rejected or abandoned wholly. There is a relativity of all levels of existence, and, therefore, there is a necessity to blend together the phenomenal and the noumenal, the relative and the absolute. Man and God have to work together. This is the principle behind Arjuna and Krishna sitting in one chariot and driving forward in the field of the battle of the universe, which spiritual message is the connotation

of the last verse, in the Eighteenth Chapter. Where man and God work in collaboration, there shall be victory ; there shall be success ; there shall be happiness ; and there shall be prosperity, there shall be righteousness ruling everywhere. Righteousness is the harmony between the individual and the Absolute, and this is Arjuna and Krishna working in union, seated in one vehicle. That vehicle may be this body, it may be human society, it may be the whole universe. Any field of operation is the chariot, and in every such field there should be this co-operation between the individual and the universal. In every bit of the relative or the particular, the universal is immanent, and the recognition of this universality in every particularity is the wisdom of life.



The Bhagavadgita occurs in the Bhishma-Parva of the Mahabharata. Placed in the exciting context of an imminent war between cousins descending from a Common ancestry, the Gospel purports to dramatise the perpetual conflict of cosmic forces which, on the one hand gravitate towards the Supreme Absolute, and on the other rush to immolate themselves in the diversity of names, forms and the processes of the phenomenal universe. The Eighteen Chapters of the Gita represent, in a majestic manner, the rungs in the ladder of Yoga, the stages of the ascent of consciousness to the culmination of the purpose of all evolution,—the realisation of the Great Goal of life. The lectures which embody the contents of this stimulating book cover the entire range of the incomparable profundities of this magnificent scripture of all seeking souls the world over, and provide a rich treat, the value of which can be assessed only by the magnitude of spiritual insight which the reader will gain on a careful and concentrated study of this superb legacy to humankind.